SELF-RESPECTING ANIMALS:
THREE PAPERS ON KANT'S VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE AND MORALITY

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This dissertation takes the form of three papers. Each one can be read on its own, and I present them here in a format that lends itself to such reading. However, they also center around a common topic: how Immanuel Kant conceives of immorality and how this theory informs his understanding of morality.

In the first paper, I argue that Kant does not think immorality in human beings is always interpersonally arrogant, focusing in particular on what Kant means by "self-conceit." I argue that self-conceit is a happiness-emphasizing conception of self, in which one overvalues the inclinations. When life goes well, this self-conception and the standard of assessment it implies do lead to the opinion that one is worth more than others. When life goes badly, however, they lead to the opposite (and no less harmful) misunderstanding.

In the second paper, I address another motivation for the claim that Kant thought interpersonal arrogance was the central moral problem for human beings: Kant's theory of happiness. Kant held that human beings are competitive, as can be seen in several of his doctrines about how human beings conceive of and pursue happiness. I show how Kant explains this competitive bent in human nature while maintaining the thesis that human beings are interested in happiness only because it promises to be satisfying. I argue that Kant's understanding of human rationality and of human interdependence result in competitiveness without the assumption that human beings are arrogant.

In the third paper, I turn to Kant's theory of self-respect, using my understanding of Kant on immorality and arrogance to explain the importance of self-respect in his moral theory. I argue that self-respect is significant specifically because it is a way of valuing oneself that acknowledges the disharmony between one's desire for happiness and one's commitment to morality.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Catherine M. M. Smith was born in Wisconsin in 1988. She earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2011. Starting in the fall of 2011, she attended graduate school at the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University, graduating in 2017 with a PhD.

For Patricia and James Mathie

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Essential portions of all of these papers have also been presented to insightful audiences at American Philosophical Association meetings, North American Kant Society meetings, and the Department Workshop and Dissertation Working Group at Cornell University. The feedback I received from participants in all of these was invaluable to the progress of my project.

I was advised before entering graduate school that I should judge graduate programs not entirely by the faculty I would be able to work with, but also by the people who would be my fellow students. This was wonderful advice, and I have been lucky to be supported in the writing of this dissertation not only by my advisers, but also by an especially sharp and engaged group of fellow graduate students. I will refrain from listing all of their names here, but I am especially grateful to Kimberly Brewer, Brandon Conley, Fran Fairbairn, Thomas Foerster, Quitterie Gounot, Marta Heckel, Lucia Munguia, Jacob Wojtowicz, and Yuna Won for many cumulative hours of writing together, which made the writing process so much more enjoyable.

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PAPER ONE

Must "Self-Conceit" be Self-Conceited?

Catherine M. M. Smith

Introduction

In Act 3 of Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun,* Walter Lee Younger tells his family that he thinks he should accept money from the white neighborhood committee pressuring them to leave the area. Although the family is on the verge of owning their house after generations of saving, financial troubles have hit, and the message from the neighborhood committee is clear: they are not welcome to stay. These are solid prudential reasons to leave. Walter's family, however, suspects that they are not good enough: his mother asks him to think about how this decision will make him feel. What follows is initially a defense by Walter of his decision, but his defense gradually morphs into a caricature, a deliberate imitation of the obedient black man that the neighborhood committee wants him to be.

In his monologue, Walter demonstrates to himself and to the audience of the play what his mother already knows: that there is an important, albeit unfair, sense in which his decision to take the money would be immoral. There is no straight-forward sense in which it would be arrogant. There is no straight-forward sense in which Walter would be placing his own needs and desires before the more important claims of other people. But in taking the money, Walter would be wronging himself.

Hansberry's play is read by high-schoolers all over the United States, and it documents an experience that is in no way unheard of or exceptional. And yet when we think about immorality and about the characteristics that lead people to act immorally, we often overlook

cases like this one. Instead, we occupy ourselves with cases in which people hurt others and approach the world as though they were the only important thing in it. It is important to talk about these latter kinds of examples. Some of the most obvious cases of immoral action, ones we have an urgent need to address, seem to be driven by such arrogant disregard for other people. But it is not only arrogant people who find themselves with powerful temptations to act in ways that they themselves would consider, on reflection, to be immoral.

Immanuel Kant was well aware of this. Despite his insistence that even the most common human understanding has access to the moral law, he acknowledges that many of us do the wrong thing sometimes, even when we know it's wrong. Further, it seems that Kant should fully endorse the idea that people can be immoral by degrading themselves, not just by degrading others. But in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant introduces as the root of our moral failings a tendency he calls "self-conceit" (*Eigendünkel*). Many authors have held that this tendency is a false understanding of ourselves which ranks us above all others, leading us to think that only our own wants and needs matter.[1] This reading is understandable, given the name of the tendency and given Kant's penchant for making our alleged preoccupation with our desires sound self-cherishing. "[I]f we look more closely at the intentions and aspirations in [human action]," he comments, "we everywhere come upon the dear self" (4:407).

[1] Stephen Engstrom, Allen Wood, and Andrews Reath are three examples, whom I will discuss in section three. Even some authors who do not think that to be self-conceited is directly to rank oneself above others nonetheless agree that self-conceit must involve unconditional esteem for oneself that *implicitly* ranks oneself above others. Frederick Neuhouser (2008) affirms this sort of interpretation, for example, when he writes that people often misinterpret Rousseau's concept of amour-propre because they take it to be the same as Kant's concept of self-conceit. As Neuhouser understands it, self-conceit "can be defined as taking one's own happiness—rather than the moral law, which also takes the happiness of others into account—as the supreme criterion for action [and] since this is in effect to regard oneself as worthier of happiness than others, it can plausibly be viewed as embodying an inflated sense of self-worth)" (61). Barbara Herman (2005), Christine Korsgaard (1998), and Stephen Darwall (2008) see self-conceit as a tendency to evaluate oneself positively no matter what.

But this view of immorality seems like it could be general only if we avert our eyes from cases like Walter's.[2] One possible reaction to this would be to conclude that Kant had a very limited and inaccurate understanding of immorality—and I am not going to argue here that his understanding of immorality was fully adequate to the complexity of human life. However, I think we underestimate Kant's theory if we think it is limited in precisely this way. Kant acknowledges the moral dangers of degrading oneself, deferring automatically to authority, and generally failing to treat oneself as the equal of others. The command to respect oneself appears many times throughout his work, sometimes with what seems like over-zealous rigor. Even to *sell your hair*, he warns, might be to violate that duty (6:423). It would be surprising if this same philosopher had fallen prey to the error of thinking that immorality is only an issue for the arrogant—a doctrine that pairs naturally with the claim that to be morally good is to be humble and unpresupposing.

In light of that, my project here will be to present and argue for a new interpretation of self-conceit as it appears in the third chapter of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. According to my interpretation, Kant holds that we are self-conceited in only a rather technical sense. He holds that we assign too much (and the wrong kind of) importance to what he calls our

[2] My argument relies on the assumption that it is worth-while to make sure theories of immorality encompass cases of immorality that are more likely to occur in highly non-ideal circumstances. My belief that this is true depends on a way of thinking about morality that I will not be defending in full here, and which is, I believe, somewhat different than the usual conception of it. There is a tendency, bolstered today by the ease with which social media facilitates public shaming, to think that granting that a person is engaging in something immoral is tantamount to singling them out for censure and punishment. This way of thinking of immorality makes morality itself out to be a kind of bat with which we cudgel each other when we do something wrong. I am not motivated, in this paper, by the idea that it is worthwhile to bring people into swinging distance of this bat. I think it is important to include the right kinds of actions and tendencies in our conception of immorality because many people are inspired, animated, and empowered by morally-loaded projects. Part of the reason I consider duties to oneself important is that such duties emphasize the fact that some of the important moral projects in our lives are self- and not other-regarding. Telling someone that they have a given moral obligation can certainly be a way of taking them down a notch, but it can also be a way of letting them know that they have a very good reason to try very hard to do something, even though it's difficult. I recognize that these rather impressionistic comments are not enough to fully support the conception of morality I have in mind, but I hope that they help make clearer what worth there might be in trying to broaden instead of narrow our conception of immorality.

"inclinations:" we tend to assess our actions, ourselves, and our lives as though fulfilling these inclinations—and hence achieving happiness—were of primary importance. On this understanding of self-conceit, it can actually result in both overly low and overly high opinions of oneself, depending on how happy one is. This reading, I argue, is not only better suited to Kant's texts overall, but also leaves him with a better moral theory than the standard alternative.

In section 1, I outline the role self-conceit plays in Kant's moral theory and argue that, in order to play this role, self-conceit must be a tendency found universally in human beings, and that it must play a significant part in all immoral action. In section 2, I argue that because both these claims must be true of self-conceit, we have good reason to hope that it is not the same as interpersonal arrogance.

In sections 3 and 4, I discuss Kant's claim that self-conceit is closely related to "all the inclinations taken together" and his claim that self-conceit results from our tendency to make self-love "lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle," and explain how these passages work with my interpretation. In section 5, I argue that Kant's texts reveal that he was very much aware of the human struggle with self-debasement and deference, as well as arrogance. I also explain how my reading of self-conceit encompasses both struggles.

In section 6, I address the biggest worry for my reading: that it does not explain what exactly is self-conceited about self-conceit. I argue that even on my reading, there is still something self-conceited about the tendency. Although self-conceit does not entail that agents will always think they are better than others, it does involve an overestimation of human nature.

1. *Self-Conceit's Role in Kant's Moral Theory*

First, a caveat. Kant uses the word "self-conceit" throughout his work in different ways. For most of this paper, I am going to be focusing on only one of those uses. That instance occurs in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in Kant's discussion of "what [the moral law] effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive" (5:72). The tendency Kant calls self-conceit here is an important part of his story about how the moral law can be an incentive for us. Because my interpretation of self-conceit will focus on making sure that it can play its role in this story, I am going to explain what Kant means by incentive, and what it would mean for the moral law to be an incentive for us, in a little more detail.

An incentive (*Triebfeder*) is something like a motivation: it moves a person to act.[3] Many of the incentives human beings experience come from what Kant calls their "sensibility." We are sensible in that we are physical beings who can sense or be affected by the world around us. The facts about what we want to do are often determined by our sensibility: what tastes we like, what harms or nourishes us, what we find pleasant or unpleasant to experience. The desires we form on this basis are what Kant calls our "inclinations" (*Neigungen*).[4] I am "inclined" to act in a certain way to the extent that my desire to act that way is based in my impression of how it would make me feel. The thought that a certain action would satisfy an inclination is often an incentive for human action.

However, the things that human beings morally ought to do are determined not by their sensibility, but by their rational nature. This means that we are not always sensibly inclined to do

[3] Kant defines it as "the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law" (5:72).
[4] See 4:414fn. Kant also sometimes refers to these as "sensible desires."

what is morally right. Hence, although we always *ought* to act in accordance with the moral law, we do not always want (or decide) to do so. If the moral law can *itself* function as an incentive, however, then our awareness of what we ought to do can move us to act, independently inclination. Kant argues that the moral law *can* be an incentive. It becomes one, he explains, by calling up a moral feeling he calls "respect" (*Achtung*). This brings us back to the topic of self-conceit: according to Kant, we experience respect for morality because the moral law strikes down self-conceit.

In the following quote, Kant explains that self-conceit is one of two types of "self-regard" that are made up by our inclinations:

> All the inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness) constitute regard for oneself (*solopsismus*). This is either the self-regard of *love for oneself*, a predominant *benevolence* toward oneself (*Philautia*), or that of *satisfaction with oneself* (*Arrogantia*). The former is called, in particular, *self-love*; the latter, *self-conceit*. (5:73)

It is, according to Kant, the moral law's ability to limit self-love—and hence to delegitimize self-conceit—that leads us to experience respect for it:

> [The moral law] is… an object of *respect* inasmuch as, in opposition to its subjective antagonist, namely the inclinations in us, it *weakens* self-conceit; and inasmuch as it even *strikes down* self-conceit, that is, humiliates it, it is an object of the greatest *respect* and so too the ground of a positive feeling that is not of empirical origin and is cognized a priori. (5:73)[5]

The victory of the moral law over all of the inclinations, and thereby over self-conceit, makes dramatically apparent to us the fact that in the face of moral considerations, all of our other concerns can become irrelevant or petty to us. Hence, we feel respect for the moral law. Our

[5] Another similar description of this process occurs at 5:75-76: "[T]he representation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its illusion, and thereby the hindrance to pure practical reason is lessened and the representation of the superiority of its objective law to the impulses of sensibility is produced and hence, by removal of the counterweight, the relative weightiness of the law (with regard to a will affected by impulses) in the judgment of reason [is also produced]."

respect is premised in part upon our previous (and recurring) impression that this *could not happen*. Our impression that our inclinations are all-important, an impression encoded precisely in our self-conceit, is part of what makes the moral law's toppling of these considerations riveting.

Although self-conceit is a hindrance to morality, then, it is also an essential part of our experience of respect.[6] This relationship between respect and self-conceit motivates two theses that support my reading of self-conceit. The first thesis is what I will call the *Root* thesis:

Root: *Self-conceit is the driving force behind human immorality.*

Because self-conceit is involved in the production of respect, and the moral law should be at least capable of calling up respect in the face of any temptation to act wrongly, self-conceit must be active in any case in which immoral actions seem attractive to human beings.

It may seem from what we have covered so far that self-love could incline people to act immorally on its own, and so that some immoral actions could be motivated purely by self-love instead of by any kind of self-conceit. However, Kant's text indicates that the destruction of self-conceit is particularly important. For example, in the passage above (5:73), Kant discusses exclusively the way our contemplation of the moral law interacts with our self-conceit, leaving self-love to the side. This emphasis makes sense because the limitation of self-love is precisely a limitation that prevents it from crossing over into self-conceit. It is only when self-love's influence over us leads us to think that it should win out in conflicts with the moral law that it becomes problematic. In this sense, our immorality involves self-conceit. Our self-love is immoral only to the extent that it pushes us to become self-conceited.

[6] Other commentators on self-conceit have taken note of the fact that Kant assigns it this dual role, as both harm and help to our moral agency. See for example, Stephen Engstrom (2010, 118); Barbara Herman (2005, 31). Camilla Serck-Hanssen (2005) presents a similar picture of our immoral tendencies, although her focus is on something Kant calls "radical evil," instead of on self-conceit (see 65).

So, if there are some immoral actions that do not have self-conceit at their basis, the fact that respect can only arise in cases in which the agent *is* subject to self-conceit would mean that there are some cases in which human beings considering immoral actions were incapable of experiencing respect.[7] This would be bad for Kant. Although the details of what exactly respect is and what makes it important to moral action are controversial,[8] he makes it clear that it *is* important. At times he writes as though without respect, it would be impossible for us even to think morally. He claims, for instance, that we "must have respect for the law within [ourselves] in order even to think of any duty whatsoever" (6:403), and refers to respect as that which represents actions as duties to us (6:402) and as "identical with consciousness of one's duty" (6:464). Our respect for the law is also, for Kant, the source of our true respect for ourselves. Respect reveals to us that although we are capable of immoral actions, we are also the kinds of beings who are free to positively take an interest in acting morally well (5:80-81).[9] This revelation about what we are calls up "reverence" for ourselves (5:87).

If *Root* were false, there would be some ways of being drawn to immoral action that would make it impossible for respect to reach us. Morality would be incapable of reminding a person in these circumstances of their own moral nature and calling them to action. Although this might not mean such agents could not act morally well at all, it would mean that they would

[7] Engstrom also notes that Kant's description of how respect arises depends upon the presence of self-conceit (2010, 118). He argues, however, that this poses no problem for Kant's theory of moral motivation because it is only due to self-conceit's opposition to morality that any explanation of the moral law's functioning as an incentive is required in the first place. Part of my argument in this paper is that only my reading of self-conceit can really allow for this defense because only it fully accounts for the subjective forces that oppose morality in us.

[8] The process that Kant describes in this part of the *Critique* clearly describes the arising of a feeling: it involves stages of pain, and Kant is explicit that respect depends upon "sensible feeling, which underlies all our inclinations" (5:75). But the process itself is also triggered by a judgment about what we ought (morally) to do. Commentators disagree about whether both the feeling and the judgment are necessary for moral behavior on Kant's view, or whether only the judgment is needed. All authors, however, agree that respect is important, if not as a necessary component in moral action, then as an aid to such action and to the achievement of virtue.

[9] This observation is supported especially by Janelle DeWitt's (2014) account of respect and Owen Ware's (2014).

require other incentives (or perhaps a forceful, alienating will to obey) to motivate themselves to action.

The second thesis Kant needs because of the relationship he posits between self-conceit and respect is what I will call the *Pervasive* thesis:

Pervasive: *All human beings tend towards self-conceit.*

If it turned out that some human beings were not subject to self-conceit, these human beings would also not be capable of experiencing respect.[10] This possibility is inconsistent with what Kant claims in the passage at hand. Further, if *Root* were true and *Pervasive* false, that would mean that, because all immorality had its source in self-conceit (as *Root* claims), and some human beings did not experience self-conceit (as the denial of *Pervasive* entails), some human beings would be free from the flaw that gives immorality much of its draw for human beings. Hence, they would be free from the struggle to avoid immorality. Aside from the fact that this seems implausible, Kant explicitly claims that no human beings are like this.

Root and *Pervasive* would be unnecessary if, in his discussion of respect, Kant indicated that this was just one way respect could be experienced. He does not do this. Hence, the error that he labels "self-conceit" must fulfill these theses. I have indicated that many interpretations of self-conceit analyze it as arrogance that assumes superiority over others—a kind of unconditional self-admiration that makes one's own self seem to be the most important thing in the world. I will now explain why this trait could not fulfill *Pervasive* or *Root*.

[10] Pervasive also must be true in order for Kant to be right that we can know a priori—that is, independently of any empirical survey—that respect will arise in all people, as Kant also claims at 5:73.

2. *Arrogance is Not Enough*

The standard reading of self-conceit cannot plausibly fulfill *Pervasive* because human beings do not all suffer from inextinguishable pride that comes at the expense of their proper respect for others. Some human beings are mired instead in self-doubt and the sense that they are not important. Feelings of worthlessness are listed as a symptom of major depressive episodes and disorders, for example.[11] Human societies are also often laced with oppressive practices that impress upon some groups of people the claim that they are inferior. There is a large literature describing personal experiences with oppression and the way oppression targets one's sense of self-worth.[12]

Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter from Birmingham Jail provides one example. In the letter, King explains his impatience with those who are urging that he and others involved in the Civil Rights Movement be less aggressive in their call for change. The letter conveys a broad spectrum of factors that come together to make oppression demeaning:

> Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But… when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky… when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"… when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.[13]

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[11] See, for example, the *American Psychiatric Association* entry on depression at http://www.psychiatry.org/depression, as of 23 Jan. 2015.

[12] See, for instance, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Albert Memmi's *Dominated Man* (1971), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), or, much more recently, George Yancy's "Whiteness and the Return of the Black Body" (*Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 2005), among others.

[13] The entire letter can be read at various websites online, including <http://www.drmartinlutherkingjr.com>, where many of King's other speeches and writings can also be found.

Although the fact that some human beings are made to endure these kinds of conditions does not disprove *Pervasive* on the standard reading of self-conceit, it forces upon it the implausible corollary that even the individuals who wrote testimonies like this tended to think they were superior to others. This is, at the very least, a difficult position to maintain. It seems much more likely that, to the extent that individuals in these conditions struggle with a tendency to immorality (as Kant insists we all do), they would struggle with immorality in a form very unlike interpersonal arrogance.

Further problems arise when we consider *Root*. If we read self-conceit as interpersonal arrogance, then *Root* claims that self-conceited pride is *the* moral problem for human beings. But debasement is an equally serious obstacle to human virtue.[14] Consider the following case: a secretly insecure bully lashes out at her classmates not because she thinks they are putting on airs, but because she thinks they genuinely are smarter, more attractive, and overall better than she is. By scaring and hurting her classmates, she manages to gain a kind of respect from them that is, as far as she believes, the closest thing to equality with them that she could ever have. In her mind, this is the only way that she can avoid all of them noticing her (she believes) obvious flaws, teasing her, and laughing behind her back.

There are other cases, even if this bully case seems implausible. Immoral action does not always involve directly harming others—it can also involve failing to stand up for them. For every bully, there will also likely be bystanders: people who believe that what is going on is wrong, and yet who cannot bring themselves to stop it. Here, a lack of self-importance can be

[14] In addition, vanity does not always make sense as the primary target for moral criticism. In some circumstances, overinflated pride can actually serve as a kind of moral resource. The sense that one is important and valuable can actually make it easier to face up to particularly difficult moral obligations. When the morally required action requires a lot of effort and skill, it is precisely agents who are confident in their capacities, perhaps even those who think they are better than others, who may find it easier to do what they suspect they morally ought to do. Here I am extending the claim past the point where Kant would likely follow. However, I think the plausibility of this claim bolsters the intuition that it is an oversimplification to think of immorality as straight-forwardly arrogant.

just as morally dangerous as arrogance. The motivation behind bystanding can easily come in the form of trouble convincing oneself that one has the status, knowledge, or capacity to say that something is wrong. In any case, it seems like a misunderstanding of human nature to claim, as the combination of *Root* and the standard reading of self-conceit would lead us to claim, that it is much easier to be morally good when one is surrounded by circumstances that assault one's sense of worth, instead of by circumstances that reinforce it.

Because Kant wants self-conceit in his technical sense to play a role which requires it to fulfill both *Pervasive* and *Root*, we have reason to think more closely about what exactly is self-conceited about it. In order to see whether or not Kant's texts necessitate the standard interpretation, we have to return to the details of how exactly self-conceit works.

3. Systems of Inclinations and Self-Conceit

Self-conceit, recall, is one of the two types of self-regard that Kant claims are tightly related to our inclinations. In self-love (the first type of self-regard), our inclinations constitute our self-benevolence, whereas in self-conceit (the second type), they constitute our self-satisfaction. There is something restrictedly appropriate, on Kant's view, about our inclinations constituting self-benevolence (as they do in self-love), whereas they can never appropriately constitute self-satisfaction (as they do in self-conceit). He claims that the moral law only limits self-love, whereas it destroys self-conceit in a more thorough way (5:73). So far, though, we have not gone into much detail about exactly how inclinations are related to these two types of self-regard.

Stephen Engstrom (2010) offers one explanation of how our inclinations are involved in self-love. According to Engstrom, people develop self-love when they learn that they are a necessary condition of the pleasure they experience when they fulfill their inclinations. They come to care for themselves on this basis: as the subjects of their happiness. On Engstrom's reading, self-benevolence is an attitude we have towards ourselves: a kind of affectionate feeling. However, Kant also sometimes discusses benevolence in terms of a program for action. When Kant discusses our duty to love our neighbors in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for instance, he suggests that we ought to think about this duty as a duty to benevolence "as conduct" (6:401). Although we cannot control whether we feel emotional love towards other human beings, we *can* control how we treat them—and we must treat them well. When Kant claims that we tend to let our system of inclinations constitute our self-benevolence, he could mean that in self-love, we allow our inclinations to similarly influence our actions. In other words, self-love could amount to adopting a commitment to act in accordance with inclination—to care well for oneself specifically as a being with sensible wants and needs.

On either Engstrom's reading or the conduct reading, self-love is not completely misguided. We are sensible beings with inclinations, and we value that aspect of ourselves. That, however, is not *all* we are. So the moral law limits self-love. It adds a proviso: inclinations may guide our action or ground love for ourselves, but they cannot do it alone—they must be regulated, in turn, by the moral law.

In the case of self-conceit, however, inclinations are tied up not with the agent's self-benevolence, but rather with their "self-satisfaction." Kant uses this term interchangeably with "self-esteem." The esteem of self-esteem differs from the love of self-love in that esteem involves a positive *assessment* of something. We must compare esteemed objects to some

standard, and they must *earn* their esteem by comparing well.[15] It is this kind of earned self-assessment which, according to Kant, our system of inclinations ought not even partially constitute. But there is an open question about how our inclinations could in any sense constitute (however mistakenly) such an assessment. Some leap of reasoning is required to move from facts about what one wants to a conclusion about what kind of esteem one has earned.

According to Engstrom, our inclinations play a role in our (self-conceited) self-assessment when we take the mere fact that we have a conception of happiness as confirmation that we are superior to others. As he explains it, in self-conceit, we come to think of ourselves "as worthy of esteem on account of [our] cognitive power… to determine an end" and form conceptions of the good (2010, 108). But, as we noted, esteem requires a point of comparison against which the esteemed object looks good, and the observation that one has the power to set ends does not readily suggest one. Engstrom concludes that "[s]elf-conceit's esteem for self can therefore only be indirect, through depreciatory judgments concerning others" (109). In other words, the self-satisfaction we build in self-conceit can only be built on the belief that our capacities prove others inferior. Thus, self-conceit must be arrogance of the kind that assumes superiority over others.

Engstrom is not alone in thinking that self-conceit must have something to do with a judgment that we are better than other people. According to Allen Wood (1999), for example, Kant believes that human beings first learn to esteem themselves on the basis of their superiority over nonrational animals. This leads them to want to use similar grounds to claim superiority over other human beings, and this illicit claim is what Kant means by self-conceit (241).

[15] Engstrom also notes this characteristic of esteem, in contrast to affection (see 2010, 109). He makes the further point that esteem as an *aesthetic* judgment is also relative to the subject: "it lies in feeling, in one's consciousness of the effect one's own comparison of the object with oneself has upon oneself" (ibid). I am going to be leaving the aesthetic aspect of judgments of esteem implicit in this discussion—I believe nothing turns on it for my purposes.

Andrews Reath (2006) also sees self-conceit as interpersonal arrogance, describing it as "a disposition to assign oneself a standing to treat oneself and one's subjective concerns as objective reasons that one does not and cannot acknowledge in others…to accord oneself a special standing to make claims on one's own behalf *in virtue of one's superior worth*" (25, emphasis mine).

However, this is not the only way to explain the relationship our inclinations have to our self-assessment. Instead, we can understand self-conceit as a tendency to overvalue our own inclinations, taking the conception of happiness they help us construct as a guide for how to earn esteem for ourselves.[16] This reading of self-conceit still respects the observation that esteem requires comparison. Instead of supposing that self-conceited agents take *others* as their point of comparison, however, it suggests that they esteem themselves based on how well their actual state matches up with the ideal state of happiness they construct on the basis of all of their inclinations taken together. In other words, they tend to mistake the measure of their happiness for the measure of their worth.

At this point it is important to note that when Kant speaks of "happiness" he does not mean only simple and object-related pleasures. One important component of human happiness, according to Kant, is good relationships with others (which presuppose at least their having the opinion that we are their equals). This means that what others think of us and how they relate to us is in no sense irrelevant to our level of happiness. Human happiness is also, as Kant explains elsewhere (6:27), comparative: our judgments about how happy we are depend on how other

[16] This interpretation makes the relationship between self-esteem and inclinations similar to the relationship between self-benevolence and inclinations as I suggested we understand it. In both cases, the inclinations are used to present a program for action. In the case of self-benevolence, the program is one that the agent adopts as what they *will* do; in the case of self-esteem, the program is one that the agent adopts as (in addition) what they believe they *ought* to do.

people around us are doing. On the current reading of self-conceit, in other words, self-conceited human beings are not released entirely from the tendency to compare themselves with others—they do so in order to assess their own happiness, and then the resulting judgment about how happy they are feeds into their conception of themselves as of high or low worth. What I wish to make clear in my reading is that it is not this first move, in which the human being finds themself more or less happy depending on how their own state compares to those around them, that is "self-conceited" on Kant's view. Comparisons with others in and of themselves are not problematic, on Kant's view.[17] The move that constitutes self-conceit is the one that follows this, in which the agent takes this judgment as evidence (or acts as though this judgment constituted evidence) of the worth of their person.

The problem with this latter tendency is that although comparisons between our current and our ideal level of happiness can furnish us with useful information about how we might want to proceed if we want to be happy, these comparisons cannot serve as adequate grounds for a judgment about our worth. The worth of human beings comes, according to Kant, in the form of dignity—not in the form of price (4:435). This means that no judgment about my ability to secure happiness, for myself or for others, can justify the claim that I am of a lower (or higher) overall worth than other human beings.

If it is a fact that we have a moral obligation to resist our own tendency to allow others' attempts to convince us that we are not of worth to work, this fact by itself does not justify the claim that we should put our energy into strengthening our own sense or worth and *not* into resisting their attacks on us more directly. It would still make sense to resist these attacks both in

[17] I argue elsewhere [Paper Two] that this comparativity is due to the way humans use their rational capacities to extend and alter their originally instinctively determined desires, and that it does not indicate that people are actually directly concerned with being better than other people.

light of the human imperfections that can help make these attacks so effective and in light of the fact that these attacks are *wrong*, independently of whether they tend to lower the victim's sense of self-worth. So, for instance, it seems entirely consistent to say that Martin Luther King Jr. was morally right in insisting on his own worth in the face of conditions he faced as a black American man in the 60s and that he was morally right in making it his mission to dismantle the system of injustices that made it difficult for him and for many others to pursue happiness and maintain a sense of human dignity.

The claim that people tend to measure their worth in terms of their happiness may seem unintuitive. However, if we examine it more closely, we will see that it is actually rather familiar. Even if we do not fully consciously endorse this claim, many of our natural reactions to happiness and unhappiness seem to presuppose it. It is not uncommon to conclude directly from one's achievement of happiness that its mere existence proves that one has *earned* it—and that having thus earned happiness means that one deserves esteem. This is one of the facts about us that makes it difficult for us to recognize our privileges. We tend to feel proud of ourselves for being able to acquire the things we want—even in cases in which the acquisition had little to do with our own skill and in which the things we want are not particularly morally admirable.

We can see this familiar leap of reasoning in the old poem: "Little Jack Horner sat in the corner, eating a Christmas pie; he put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum, and said, 'What a good boy am I!'" Kant sees this as a natural way to think, too. He notes that "[p]ower, riches, honor, even health and that complete well-being and satisfaction with one's condition called *happiness*, produce boldness and thereby often arrogance as well unless a good will is present which corrects the influence of these on the mind" (4:393).

Just as the good life can feed into arrogance, circumstances which compromise happiness can feed into a sense of personal worthlessness. Here we can turn again to oppressive social conditions as an example. Oppression is often accompanied by intense restrictions on the abilities of people to pursue important components of their conceptions of happiness. Some forms of oppression trap individuals in poverty or refuse them the chance to pursue education and satisfying careers. These conditions place limits on the extent to which oppressed individuals can achieve the kind of happy state that fuels pride so naturally, according to Kant, and maintaining a base-line of self-esteem in these conditions can be very difficult. Unsurprisingly, movements working to change conditions for oppressed people often focus especially on pride.

It is actually quite natural for human beings to weave together their state of happiness and their sense of value as a person. Arrogance is a vice that tends to assail us when we look around ourselves and see luxury and endless opportunities—but when we find ourselves struggling to make ends meet, it is more likely that we will have to fight to convince ourselves we still deserve to be treated with respect. Since the error Kant calls "self-conceit" is supposed to be something to which all human beings are subject, it would be good for Kant's theory if the error he meant to refer to was this tendency to respect oneself (or chastise oneself) on the basis of one's prudential achievements alone.

It seems more plausible that this tendency would fulfill *Pervasive*, then. On my proposed reading, Kant would hold that this tendency was also at the root of immoral actions in human beings, and it would be a tendency we are subject to because we are morally imperfect. Before I proceed on to my discussion of another part of Kant's description of self-conceit, I want to make a few comments concerning my reading of self-conceit and *Root*. There is an uncomfortable consequence to my insistence that self-conceit in my sense does a better job fulfilling *Root* than

self-conceit in the interpersonal sense. My reading of self-conceit, by encompassing some cases in which agents have had their sense of personal worth undermined by oppressive conditions, implies that oppression is sometimes made more devastatingly effective by the moral imperfection of those being oppressed.

I want to emphasize that this claim is not the same as the claim that practices like oppression are only harmful to people if they are morally flawed or morally flawed in the specific way I have outlined here. The disadvantages and losses that come along with oppression are harms, the pain of which cannot be removed merely by the reassurance that these harms do not make one any less morally worthy a person. These harms on their own are also part of what makes oppression wrong, even on a Kantian view. Interfering with the ability of other human beings to pursue their happiness runs directly against the injunction to treat them as ends in themselves, and there is excellent reason to attempt to put a stop to these practices which has nothing to do with self-conceit.

I also do not think that oppression only interferes with one's sense of worth to the extent that one is subject to what we are here calling "self-conceit." A person's sense of self-worth can also be threatened by being surrounded by people who consistently tell them or imply to them that they are inferior, simply because basic intellectual humility makes its hard to dismiss any claim that the majority of one's peers seem to endorse. For all I have said here, these cases might remain outside the scope of Kant's analysis of immorality (which we might not find objectionable). My aim here has not been to show that Kant's analysis of immorality will encompass all cases of uncertainty about one's worth, or that it explains oppression. Instead, what I have aimed to show is that his analysis of self-conceit is consistent with the reality that some immoral actions are accompanied and encouraged by overly low instead of overly high

opinions of oneself, since both of these can constitute what he calls "self-conceit" in different conditions.

And finally, I want to note that even though the very different kinds of obstacles to morally good action I have discussed here can all be brought under the umbrella of self-conceit, this does not mean that they are in other respects on a par with each other. For instance, we might think (although I will not be arguing that Kant thought this) that this analysis of self-conceit supports the idea that the worth-*undermining* version of self-conceit is more difficult to overcome than the worth-*inflating* version of it is. By elevating our inclinations to the level of supreme moral importance, self-conceit makes it even more difficult that it already would be for us to act morally well in opposition to inclination. Effectively, it amplifies the already loud volume of our wants and needs. We might think that the results of this amplification are worse for those who are unhappy. Arguably, our desire to be at least tolerably happy might be more urgent and forceful than our desire to sustain and increase already affirming levels of happiness, so the moral challenge of resisting an amped-up version of the former might be significantly higher than the challenge of resisting an amped-up version of the latter.

At this point, then, I only mean to have shown that the alternative reading of self-conceit I have presented here is more suited to the fact that human beings are not all arrogant and to the fact that conditions that suppress self-esteem are not conditions that thereby make morality *easier*. Moral obstacles can be propped up by dejection just as easily as they can be propped up by arrogance, and my proposed reading of self-conceit allows for this by allowing for the possibility that what Kant calls "self-conceited" thinking can manifest itself as dejection rather than as arrogance, especially when circumstances are not good. My proposed reading of self-

conceit remains promising when we turn to Kant's description of the error that underlies our tendency to be subject to self-conceit.

4. Errors in Law-Making

Before I explicate Kant' description of the erroneous thinking underlying self-conceit in more detail, a brief note on Kant's vocabulary is necessary. In this passage, "subjective determining grounds of choice" refers to our inclinations. These are "subjective" in the sense that they are what happens to be the case for each of us, based on our own experience of what is pleasurable and what is not. An "objective determining ground," however, is something we have reason to act on not because of our personal preferences, but because of sharable, universal considerations. So, when Kant contrasts ourselves "as having subjective determining grounds of choice" with ourselves "as having objective" ones, he is contrasting our physical selves with our purely rational or moral selves.

According to Kant, we are led into self-conceit by the following error:

> [W]e find our nature as sensible beings so constituted that…objects of inclination, whether of hope or fear… [come to] us, and we find our [sensible] self, even though it is quite unfit to give universal law through its maxims, nevertheless striving antecedently to make its claims primary and originally valid, just as if it constituted our entire self. This propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general can be called *self-love*; and if self-love makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-conceit*. (5:74)

Because of the powerful impression that our physical existence makes upon us, Kant claims, people act as though their inclinations justify objective laws for what he calls "the will in general".

The German phrase Kant uses, "*des Willens überhaupt*," is ambiguous, as is the English translation, between something like "the wills of all rational beings," and something like "the will generally." These two options lead to two very different ways of understanding what it means to make the claims of self-love into something law-giving for the will in general. If we understand "the will in general" as a general will encompassing all rational beings, then making the claims of our self-love law-giving would have implications for the wills of *others* in particular. In that case, self-conceited agents would make self-love law-giving by legislating it to other agents, claiming that they are required to serve the self-conceited agent's self-love.

If we understand "the will in general" as the agent's own will generally, on the other hand, then making self-love lawgiving would have implications primarily for self-conceited agents themselves. The self-conceited agent would legislate their own self-love to themself, requiring of themself that they serve it, with all the force with which they are actually required to obey the moral law.[18]

This distinction between the two ways we might think of human beings as mis-assigning ought-claims gets to the root of the difference between self-conceit understood as interpersonal arrogance and self-conceit understood as an overvaluation of inclinations. In the first case, what is objectionable about self-conceit is precisely the agent's orientation towards others. Their error is thinking that others owe them too much and that they owe others too little. This understanding of self-conceit, then, fits most naturally with Kant's text if we understand law-giving in the first sense, as giving laws (or assigning ought-claims) to others. On that reading as a whole, the mistake that the self-conceited agent makes is in thinking that everyone else is required to serve them, without any thought to what is owed in return.

[18] Andrews Reath (2006) also introduces this distinction between two ways of legislating self-love (24). Reath prefers the second reading, whereas I will be arguing here for the first.

In my proposed alternative, self-conceited agents make an error about the significance of their own inclinations for themselves—not (directly) a mistake about what others owe them. And our second model of legislation only requires each agent to look out for themself, implying at most that each person's own inclinations are important to that person. What is being asserted in this case is not really the value of any one individual over others, but rather the superior importance of the *inclinations* of each individual over the other components that make them up. In assigning self-love as an objective law to themselves, self-conceited agents also assign themselves a standard against which they can measure up well or poorly: the standard requires them to satisfy their inclinations, and hence, to be happy.

I am going to label these two readings of self-conceit as follows:

> ***(Personal)Self-Conceit****: Unconditional satisfaction with oneself, seeing oneself as superior to others, out of the implicit belief that one's own self-love is lawgiving for all agents and that one must therefore have a privileged value compared to others.*
>
> ***(Sensible)Self-Conceit****: Satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with oneself premised solely on how happy one is, based in the implicit belief that one's self-love is lawgiving for oneself and that one's inclinations are of privileged value compared to one's other characteristics.*

Most commentators have understood self-conceit in the (Personal)Self-Conceit way.[19] One reason (Personal)Self-Conceit is appealing is that it sounds a lot more like what we usually mean when we call someone self-conceited. I will discuss that problem for (Sensible)Self-Conceit in

[19] Not all recent authors have readings of self-conceit which follow (Personal)Self-Conceit. For example, Owen Ware (2013) argues against the claim that self-conceit is identical to a tendency to think of oneself as superior to other human beings. On the other hand, Ware does not draw out the ambiguities I have noted here and does not see self-conceit as an immoral tendency (see 2013; 2, 11, and 18), whereas I do. There are also authors who see immorality in Kant's theory as embodied by something more like (Sensible)Self-Conceit than (Personal)Self-Conceit, but who focus entirely on what Kant calls "radical evil" and do not directly engage with self-conceit and its role in the production of respect. In their assessment of radical evil, Pablo Muchnik (2009) and Jeanine Grenberg (2005) both emphasize the fact that it cannot be fully understood on the model of interpersonal arrogance. Because (Sensible)Self-Conceit does have moral implications and thus is tied to Kant's writing on radical evil and immorality in general, it seems to be friendly to these views. Yet another author who rejects the characterization of self-conceit as primarily rooted in arrogance is Kate Moran (2014). I discuss her work in more detail in footnote 24.

Section 6. Another reason (Personal)Self-Conceit is appealing, however, is that it frames Kant's moral theory in a way that is more amenable to contemporary moral thought. Kant's portrayal of the immoral person as someone who unduly prioritizes sensibility and his claim that the moral problem with humanity is our tendency to neglect our own rationality seems to miss the fact that morality has important things to say about how we relate to *others*. (Personal)Self-Conceit helps with this problem by framing the overvaluing of sensibility as really just a way of valuing oneself over others. Since it is much easier for us to see how the person who demands that others bend to their will is immoral, (Personal)Self-Conceit seems to bring Kant's theory closer to common-sense morality. However, I have shown that (Personal)Self-Conceit is inconsistent with both the *Root* and *Pervasive* theses in ways that reveal it to fall short of the conception of immorality we want, even in common-sense terms. Turning to the text, we will see that it also falls short of the conception of immorality Kant wanted.

5. *Textual Problems for (Personal)Self-Conceit*

Kant indicates in a variety of texts that he is concerned about the human tendency to belittle oneself. One such text is Kant's "An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?" In this text, Kant describes enlightenment as "the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority[20]" (8:35). A self-incurred minority is, according to Kant, a state in which one refuses to use one's own reasoning "not [because of] lack of understanding but [because] of lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another" (8:35). Kant does not label self-incurred minority a moral flaw. However, it is only in emerging from this condition that human beings can think for themselves and confidently use their own reason. Since using one's own

[20] This is "minority" in the sense of being a "minor" or child.

reason is essential to moral behavior according to Kant, self-incurred minority functions as an obstacle to moral virtue, and thus as something respect ought to be able to aid humans in overcoming.[21]

Kant's concern about our tendency to think too little of ourselves is also displayed in his discussion of duties to the self in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In his justifications for the prohibitions against suicide, masturbation, excessive use of drugs and alcohol, and even lying and avarice, Kant insists that the problem with these actions is that they degrade or "throw away" one's self. These actions and states, according to Kant, are morally unacceptable because they make one into a "mere means" (6:423) and "like a mere animal" (6:427); they "debase" one "beneath the beasts" (6:425) and leave one with "even less worth than… a mere thing" (6:430). Kant could not have thought that the mistaken psychology that permits these acts always involves the assertion that the agent in question is *better* than all other rational beings.

Kant's discussion of servility is also illuminating. Servility is Kant's word for the state we are in when we fail to demand decent treatment from others. Behaving servilely, according to Kant, violates the moral requirement not to let our "insignificance as a *human animal*… infringe upon [our] consciousness of [our] dignity as a *rational human being*" (6:435). Kant even suggests that this flaw is more pervasive in people than arrogance. At the end of his discussion of servility, Kant considers a worry about the "*elation of spirit*" or "esteem for [oneself]" that arises in proper moral respect. The worry is that such esteem is too similar to arrogant self-conceit and that as a result, humans would do better to try to temper it (6:437). He responds that, on the

[21] To the extent that an agent in a self-incurred minority fails to use reasoning at all, of course, they would be unable even to arrive at the "I ought" judgment that must precede the feeling of respect. However, I think this is an exaggeration of what such a condition would require. Kant believes that human beings are moral creatures, after all—it is more likely that agents in self-incurred minorities would attempt to suppress their own judgments, avoid acting on them, and try to bend them to the judgments of others.

contrary, the pervasiveness of courtly and ritualistic deference to authority seems to "prove there is a widespread propensity to servility in human beings" (6:437).

In some of Kant's four examples of moral action in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, he also seems to indicate more of a concern with what an agent's self-legislation implies for their *self*-respect, than for what it implies for their respect of others. Consider first the example of the unfortunate man who "wishes for death and yet preserves his life without loving it, not from inclination or fear but from duty" (4:398). Kant writes that the reason suicide is not permissible in this case is that the man is a human being, and "[a] human being… is not a thing… [and] cannot, therefore, dispose of a human being in [his] own person by maiming, damaging or killing him" (4:429).[22] There are other ways Kant could have assessed this case, many of which would have attached the wrongness of the man's potential suicide to an elevation of his own wants and needs over those of others. He could have pointed out the likelihood that the man's suicide would cause others sadness or guilt, or referred to a duty not to abandon others.[23] The most salient thing to Kant, however, was that the man could not commit suicide and respect *himself*.

All these elements in the text run against (Personal)Self-Conceit, according to which the conflict between self-conceit and the moral law comes down to a conflict between selfish arrogance and an appreciation for the needs of others. (Sensible)Self-Conceit has a textual advantage because it can encompass immoral action rooted in both pride and self-degradation.

[22] The example of the man who fails to develop his talents has a similar structure (see 4:430).
[23] Kant was aware of these possible lines—see 6:422.

6. (Sensible)Self-Conceit and the Text

If we read self-conceit as (Sensible)Self-Conceit, we read Kant as saying that those who are self-conceited make the mistake of associating how happy they are with how good they are or how much they are worth. This means that for lucky individuals who are able to achieve what they want in life, their luck will be accompanied by arrogance. These individuals will believe themselves to be living up to the highest standard set for human beings and will believe they have earned superiority over anyone who has not done so.

But (Sensible)Self-Conceit also allows for the possibility that humans will be discontented with themselves and view those around them as more worthy of respect than they are. The false standard set by (Sensible)Self-Conceit dictates that anyone who is particularly unhappy is failing to do what they *ought* to do as a human being. It implies that such unhappy individuals are not as valuable as other people: if they need to degrade themselves before others in order to achieve their basic wants and needs, then, according to (Sensible)Self-Conceit, this is exactly the behavior that is appropriate for them. In other words, (Sensible)Self-Conceit also encourages servility and other wrongs motivated by a sense of worthlessness. Both the reminder to respect others and the reminder to respect oneself are capable of striking down (Sensible)Self-Conceit.

There is one very obvious textual problem for (Sensible)Self-Conceit, however. Kant chose to call this tendency "*eigendünkel*": that is, quite straight-forwardly, self-conceit. Kant uses this term elsewhere in a variety of ways. Demanding that others respect one more than they respect themselves (6:462), crediting oneself with a good will when in fact one has only been *wishing* to do good things (27:358), and assuming that one can fulfill the moral law "quite purely

by [one's] own efforts" (without the aid of God) (27:350), among others, are all labeled self-conceit. These things are not identical, but they all involve assigning credit where it is not due. On the face of it, this works against my hope that Kant has given us an account of immorality that goes beyond other-degrading arrogance. However, on closer inspection, my reading of self-conceit as it appears in the second *Critique* does fit in among these other uses of the term.

After Kant has introduced the feeling of respect, he emphasizes the importance of the fact that we feel respect, instead of spontaneous liking, for the moral law:

> The moral level on which a human being… stands is respect for the moral law. The disposition incumbent upon him to have in observing it is to do so from duty, not from voluntary liking or [as something he] undertakes unbidden, gladly and of his own accord; and his proper moral condition, in which he can always be, is *virtue*, that is, moral disposition *in conflict*, and not *holiness* in the supposed *possession* of a complete *purity* of dispositions of the will. (5:84)

Here, Kant explains that respect for the moral law stands in contrast to another type of disposition toward morality, which is not possible for us: liking. But in (Sensible)Self-Conceit, we presume that we have exactly such a disposition. By identifying what the moral law commands of us with what we want, we act as though we have the sort of nature that naturally aligns perfectly with the moral law. In a sense, this is arrogant.

Kant uses the term "self-conceit" to refer to this variety of arrogance elsewhere. He uses self-conceit in this way, for example, in his discussion of "moral enthusiasm," which involves the insistence that morally good actions are done (or should be done) from liking:

> By exhortation to actions as noble, sublime, and magnanimous, minds are attuned to nothing but moral enthusiasm and exaggerated self-conceit; by such exhortations they are led into the delusion that it is not duty—that is, respect for the law whose yoke… they must bear, even if reluctantly—which constitutes the determining ground of their actions… but that it is as if those actions are expected from them, not from duty but as base merit. (5:84-5)

This way of thinking leads people, according to Kant, to a "fantastic cast of mind, flattering themselves with a spontaneous goodness of heart that needs neither spur nor bridle" (5:85). The problem with thinking that we are naturally morally good in this way is not that it would be unfortunate if it were true. The problem is that it is not true. In acting as though it were, we end up being morally careless. The type of arrogance that Kant calls self-conceit in this passage is exactly the type of arrogance implicit in (Sensible)Self-Conceit.

In noting that self-conceit is arrogant in this regard, I approach another contemporary interpretation of self-conceit in Kant. Kate Moran (2014) argues that self-conceit involves a warping of moral principles designed to make sure that we can always reassure ourselves that we are perfectly virtuous.[24] This in turn leads self-conceited agents to demand too much respect of others (if they happen to be around), since self-conceited agents believe they are perfect and hence morally superior to (imperfect) others. Nonetheless, self-conceit is not fundamentally the arrogant assertion of oneself over others (see 434). On my understanding, by contrast, self-conceited agents elevate their wants into law-like obligations. While this guarantees that they will never doubt that they are *attempting* to do the morally best thing, it does not, as I understand it, mean that they will always judge themselves to be morally successful. This is so because of an

[24] Moran supports her reading in part by pointing out that self-conceit is described as solipsistic, and by drawing a comparison between moral self-conceit and logical self-conceit. In both cases, the agent isolates themself by refusing to accept the disagreeing judgments of others, perceiving themself to be correct (logically sound or morally good) despite their lack of real evidence. I do not think Kant always means exactly the same thing by "self-conceit," so this line of argument exerts somewhat less pressure on my own reading. However, it is also worth noting that self-conceit is still solipsistic on the (Sensible)Self-Conceit reading, in the sense that the agent thinks that they alone have access to their moral obligations and their moral condition (only they can know whether or not they are happy, after all, and inclinations are private evidence, which only provide information about what is required of the agent themself). My reading can also maintain a close parallel between logical and moral self-conceit in that both cases assign mere whims (the logician's faulty reasoning and the agent's desires) more legitimacy than they deserve, ignoring the fact that these things (the reasoning or the desires) are not universalizable. My reading just will not support the claim that the self-conceited agent, in so isolating themself, guarantees a positive self-assessment.

important difference between the way that moral decisions (or acts of willing) and prudential decisions (or acts of willing) have their worth.

Kant argues that moral respect attaches to the nature of decisions themselves, not to their actual results (the good will is good not because of what it *achieves*, but because of what it *wills*). This makes the agent who assesses themself morally in charge of their own self-respect in an important way: their self-respect cannot be withdrawn (on properly moral grounds) as a result merely of the world's failure to cooperate. By contrast, self-conceit leads people to ground their self-respect in their happiness, assessing themselves on the basis of the prudential merit of their decisions. This kind of merit (and hence respect that is grounded in it) *does* require the world's cooperation, since the worth of a prudential decision does depend upon its actual results. Hence, self-conceited respect cannot be guaranteed to an agent even if they fully commit to earning it. Although the self-conceited agent can comfort themself with the thought that their desires always merit fulfillment, they will not always think well of themself in comparison with others—because they will not always be able to fulfill those desires.

There are also further textual advantages to (Sensible)Self-Conceit. Recall that Kant claims that in self-love and self-conceit, our sensible self asserts itself "as if it constituted our entire self" (5:74; my section 4). This description implies that self-conceit is most fundamentally a misinterpretation by individuals of what they are and what kinds of things can be expected or required of them because of that. It is difficult to explain why a tendency to interpersonal arrogance would be based in the illusion that our sensibility is all we are. However, this description turns out to be particularly insightful if we understand self-conceit in the (Sensible)Self-Conceit way.

According to (Sensible)Self-Conceit, self-love turns into self-conceit when we take all of self-love's advice about how to feel good and use it to set up a standard of assessment for ourselves. Under this description, self-conceit identifies self-love with the moral law, and thus identifies our inclinations with our rational and our moral capacities. It collapses what are in fact two different elements of our identity into one. Kant's comment that self-conceit involves mistaking our sensible self for our "whole" self highlights this. It makes clear the primary reason why self-conceit is problematic for us: namely, that the standard of assessment it involves (which makes our value contingent on the inclinations we are able to satisfy for ourselves) is not appropriate for a being who is both sensible *and* rational.

This collapse of the two aspects of ourselves is, in different senses, an underestimation and an overestimation of ourselves. It is an overestimation, as we have seen, in that it assumes our wants are angelic—always tracking the moral law. But it is also an underestimation, in that we fail to recognize that our sensible passivity is not the full story of who we are. Allowing our will to be determined by our inclinations amounts, according to Kant, to "heteronomy," since our sensibility is always to some degree contingent and under the control of nature (5:43). By adding to this heteronomy, as we do when we are under the sway of self-conceit, the judgment that it is appropriate for us, we act as though we were less than the free beings we are. We ignore the fact that we have, as Kant puts it, a higher "vocation" than simply to satisfy our sensible desires (5:87), and a worth that is not contingent on the cooperation of nature.

So (Sensible)Self-Conceit leads people to directly degrade both themselves and others. The self-conceited agent degrades all human beings by acting as though the only value humans have comes from their ability to realize their sensible desires. And their insistence that their sensible desires automatically align with the moral law also buys into the falsehood that it is not

good enough to be the kind of being who follows the moral law out of respect, under constraint. In self-conceit, humans seek to be the kind of spontaneously good creatures that they are not. Self-conceit, then, amounts to a deep kind of self-rejection: an unwillingness to accept that the flawed nature human beings really do have is valuable enough in itself.

Conclusion

Many have read self-conceit as it appears in Kant's account of respect as primarily constituted by the failure to properly respect and take notice of others. However, this reading is in tension with Kant's clear textual concerns about self-degradation, and the conception of immorality it gives overlooks important ways in which people can find it difficult to do what they ought. I have argued instead that self-conceit is a happiness-emphasizing conception of self, which overvalues the inclinations. When life goes well, this self-conception and the standard of assessment that it implies do lead to the opinion that one is worth more than others. When life goes badly, however, they lead to the opposite (and no less harmful) misunderstanding. Self-conceit is prideful in that it treats what is in fact an amoral part of the human being (the sensible part) as though it were moral, using it to determine not only prudential advice, but also what the agent morally ought to do. It is self-shaming, however, in that it rejects the discipline-based form of value that humans *can* have according to Kant, and bases their worth on contingent facts about nature, fortune, and social success.

The moral law corrects this misunderstanding by striking down the prideful aspect of self-conceit, revealing that our sensible nature has no guaranteed connection to the moral law. But it also uplifts us by reminding us that we are free rational beings, with a moral vocation and

a dignity within our control. The respect that these corrections call up in us has a profound and real effect on the way we treat others, if we understand the moral law properly. But first it affects us as individuals, driving us towards the revolution of self that must take place before any truly good relations with others are possible.

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PAPER TWO

It's (Not) Complicated: Kant on Human Happiness and Competitiveness

Catherine M. M. Smith

Introduction

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant writes that 'all people have already, of themselves, the strongest and deepest inclination to happiness because it is just in this idea that all inclinations unite in one sum' (4:399). One might be tempted to conclude on the basis of this reasoning that Kant's approach to happiness is almost naively straight-forward. Of *course* human beings want happiness, he seems to say: happiness is precisely a collection of the *things they want*. To draw this conclusion, however, is to set oneself up for a surprise in the secondary literature. It is surprising, in particular, to come upon Allen Wood's claim that according to Kant, 'arrogance is originally the entire rationale for our desire for happiness… [and] the real point of being happy is to feed our insatiable amour propre' (2001, 272).

According to Wood, this darker take on happiness must be Kant's considered view: the view expressed in the *Groundwork* is not up to the task of explaining the other claims Kant makes about the matter. It cannot explain, especially, the cluster of traits that makes up a uniquely human competitiveness: human beings only consider themselves happy or unhappy based on how their own state compares to that of others, they care deeply about what others think of them, they are rarely if ever satisfied. These competitive details of human happiness make sense, it is alleged, only once we understand that for Kant, the human desire for happiness is rooted in a desire for superiority over others.

This approach to Kant on happiness lends further support to a current trend in Kant scholarship, according to which Kant's view is that arrogance is the central—and most problematic—feature of the human race, one which explains myriad anthropological and moral characteristics of the species.[25] This trend is attractive in part because it helps Kant respond to a worry that commentators have had, in Kant's time[26] and more recently[27]. The worry is that Kant places morality and happiness in opposition for no good reason and that his account is needlessly austere. If Allen Wood and others are right, Kant has a great reason for thinking that morality and happiness are in some sense opposed to each other: our desire for happiness, influenced as it is by our membership in the human species, is actually an immoral, arrogant desire.

As it turns out, however, the quote with which we started is no aberration. Kant falls many times into the way of writing that on Wood's view is an oversimplification, claiming or implying often that the desire to be happy follows easily from the fact that human beings are both limited and rational beings: '[t]o be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being' (5:25); 'The human being is a being with needs… and to this extent his reason

[25] Allen Wood's reading of human nature in *Kant's Ethical Thought* was well-received (see Stephen Engstrom (2002), Sam Bruton (2001)). Henry Allison (2001) does criticize Wood's equation of radical evil with unsociable sociability, but not his analysis of unsociable sociability and equation of it with arrogance. Sharon Anderson-Gold (2001) relatedly characterizes evil as arising from the predisposition to humanity—although she also admits, as I will assert here, that natural human competitiveness is not in itself immoral (61). Stephen Darwall (2008) places self-centered arrogance at the root of immorality on Kant's account, referring explicitly to Wood's influence. Stephen Engstrom (2010) and Andrews Reath (2006) adopt similar views of Kant on immorality.

[26] Friedrich Schiller expressed concerns that Kant's 'strict and harsh opposition of the two principles that have an effect on the human will' would encourage 'somber and monkish asceticism' (2005, 150). Christian Garve accused Kant of holding that '[t]he virtuous person… strives unceasingly to be worthy of happiness but never, *insofar* as he is truly virtuous, to be happy' (Kant quoting Garve, 8:281). Hegel also criticized the relationship Kant set up between the desires of individuals and their moral duty, writing that Kant's theory 'produces a view of morality as nothing but a bitter, unending, struggle against self-satisfaction' (1967, 84).

[27] Victoria S. Wike (1994) notes that the unnecessarily austere Kant often shows up in introductory text-books (see xvii). In Susan Wolf's (1982) characterization of the Kantian ('Rational') Saint, she raises the concern that the ideal Kantian, who may suffer from 'a pathological fear of damnation… or an extreme form of self-hatred that interferes with his ability to enjoy the enjoyable life' (424). Rae Langton (1992, 485) also raises the concern that Kant's theory, by neglecting the importance of inclination, sets up a model for human action that leads to a life devoid of meaning and joy. Paul Formosa (2010) refers to the reading of Kant on which his theory promotes a battle to 'subdue or even eliminate' the inclinations (which make up our happiness) as a 'still common caricature' (1).

certainly has a commission from the side of his sensibility… to form practical maxims with a view to happiness…' (5:61); the human being cannot renounce happiness 'just as no finite rational being whatever can' (8:278).

I will argue that there is nothing mysterious going on here: Kant really did hold that human beings pursue happiness because they are interested in satisfying their inclinations.[28] There certainly have been and continue to be philosophers who understand Kant's theory of human happiness as more straight-forwardly hedonistic at its roots.[29] However, although proponents of this reading of Kant have taken up the coherence of Kant's theory of happiness on a number of counts,[30] there has not been an attempt to reconcile it specifically with human competitiveness. Without such a defense, it would seem that while a thorough-goingly desire-satisfaction reading of Kant's theory of happiness can overcome other internal problems, it cannot be squared with his larger anthropological picture of human beings.

My task here will be to tie up this loose end. I will demonstrate how, together with Kant's theory of rationality, his seemingly rudimentary view of our desire for happiness provides sufficient underpinning for the competitive details he includes in his theory of happiness. My argument is broken into five sections. In the first section, I present two accounts of Kant on happiness: Allen Wood's and the more thorough-goingly hedonistic alternative, which I term the Satisfaction Account. In sections two and three, I explain how two of the complications in Kant's theory of happiness—that human happiness is comparative, and that its achievement is hampered

[28] Other commentators have debated whether Kant's definition of happiness involves the satisfaction of *all* inclinations or the satisfaction of a systemized selection of them (See Gary Watson (1983),. I will be proceeding under the assumption that the latter is correct, but I will not be arguing for that view and do not think anything I say substantially depends on it.
[29] Mary Gregor (1963), Gary Watson (1983), Victoria S. Wike (1994), Alice Pinheiro Walla (2015), among others.
[30] Commentators have debated the definition of happiness for Kant, for instance (Victoria Wike (1987), Watson (1983)), how Kant's conception of happiness fits with his doctrine of the highest good (Gregor (1963), Guyer (2000)), whether or in what sense prudential rationality requires that we pursue happiness (Pinheiro Wall (2015), Allison Hills (2009), Barbara Herman (2007)—I draw on commentators from this last category in section 4).

by human unsociable sociability—can be explained on the Satisfaction Account. In section four, I respond to the concern that if Kant's view is the Satisfaction Account, he has no explanation for the fact that human beings form an ideal of happiness instead of simply pursuing all and only the inclinations that come along in the moment. In section five, I explain what my own reading of Kant on happiness allows to be said about Kant's insistence that there is something morally problematic about the way human beings pursue happiness.

1. *The Accounts*

In the conclusion of *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Allen Wood sums up his reading of Kant on human beings by noting that 'Kant understands virtually everything in human life as an expression of unsociable sociability, self-conceit, or the radical propensity to evil in human nature (three names for the same reality)' (1999, 334). Looking elsewhere, we find that these 'three names for the same reality' all come down to arrogance. Unsociable sociability is, according to Wood, 'the desire for superiority [which] requires others (over whom to feel superior)' (2009, 116), self-conceit is 'the false and radically corrupt notion that I am worth more than others and that confirming my self-worth involves gaining… superiority' (2001, 276), and radical evil is 'prideful self-assertion… against the dignity of rational nature in the person of other human beings' (1999, 291). Indeed, we are told quite plainly that for Kant, 'ambition is the root of all evil' (1999, 290).

Here, my focus will not be on Wood's reading of Kant on immorality (which is most directly focused on self-conceit and radical evil), but on his related reading of Kant on human happiness, which I call the *Arrogance Account*:

> *Arrogance Account*: [It is not the case that] arrogance is merely one possible side-effect of thinking oneself happy… [Rather,] arrogance is originally the entire rationale for our desire for happiness. In other words, it is our overriding need to confirm our self-conceit that makes us lay claim to happiness as a mark of superiority over others…. The real point of being happy is to feed our insatiable amour propre. (2001, 272)

Two claims are attributed to Kant, here. The first claim is that at the most basic level, human beings pursue happiness not because achieving happiness would give them satisfaction, but because they see it as a way of establishing superiority.[31] According to this view, human beings have a basic desire to be *better* than others, and our interest in happiness is spurred and shaped most fundamentally by this desire. As Wood puts it elsewhere, 'the original point of considering ourselves to be happy is that we want to think of ourselves as *better than others*' (1996, 146). The second claim Wood attributes to Kant is the claim that human beings believe they already are, in some sense, superior to others.[32] The belief that we deserve superiority partially explains our craving for it.

In contrast, I argue Kant held that our pursuit of happiness originates in a desire to experience the agreeable. On this account, our interest in superiority is secondary to that more innocent primary interest. In other words I hold the following:

> *Satisfaction Account:* According to Kant, human beings are interested in happiness because they are interested in satisfying their inclinations. Superiority becomes a particular object of fixation for some of them only because they *over*value happiness, and many see superiority as an especially helpful tool for achieving it.[33]

[31] According to Wood, this motivation comes into play only with regard to happiness, which unites our inclinations into a coherent whole. It is the pursuit of this *idea* that is to be explained by the desire to be better than others, not the pursuit of any particular object. The latter can be explained more simply, in terms of a kind of hedonism (see 2001, 266-271).

[32] Wood's definition of ambition according to Kant (1999, 263), together with his claim that ambition is the root of all human immorality, also confirms that this is one of the elements of his account.

[33] This account is deliberately worded (as is the Arrrogance Account) to capture the fact that these accounts are explicitly about the underlying human *desire* for happiness, not about the definition of happiness.

Nonetheless, some of Kant's key doctrines regarding happiness imply that humans are competitive in how they chase after and conceive of their happiness. I will explain how Kant arrives at these doctrines without making use of the Arrogance Account. The first doctrine I will turn to is Kant's definition of the predisposition to humanity and his insistence that this predisposition is intimately connected with a tendency to compare oneself to others and to worry about their opinions.

2. *The Human Preoccupation with Comparison*

One Kantian doctrine that ascribes a competitive tendency to human beings is Kant's definition of our predisposition to 'humanity.' This predisposition is one of three—to animality, to humanity, and to personality—that Kant lists in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, describing them as 'those [predispositions] that relate immediately to the faculty of desire and the exercise of the power of choice' (6:28).[34] According to Kant:

> The predisposition to humanity can be brought under the general title of a self-love which is physical and yet *involves comparison* (for which reason is required); that is, only in comparison with others does one judge oneself happy or unhappy. (6:27)

Wood claims that the fact that our happiness takes this comparative form reveals that our interest in happiness is actually an interest in being better off than others (see 2001, Section 5).

When Kant introduces the predisposition to humanity, he notes that while our desire for the form of happiness it describes does produce 'the inclination to gain worth in the opinion of

[34] These are not the only predispositions that Kant thinks are relevant to human nature. He also writes elsewhere that the human animal is distinguished from other animals by virtue of the 'technical,' 'pragmatic,' and 'moral predispositions' (7:322-325). Wilson (2006) argues that this list overlaps with Kant's list in the *Religion*, the 'pragmatic' predisposition being the same as the predisposition to 'humanity,' and the 'technical' predisposition being left out of the *Religion* list because it is not relevant to the goodness or evil of the species.

others,' that inclination leads us to seek 'merely equal worth: not allowing anyone superiority over oneself' (6:27). Our desire for equality, however, is 'bound up with the constant anxiety that others might be striving for ascendency,' and 'from this [anxiety] arises gradually an unjust desire to acquire superiority… for the sake of security, as a preventive measure' (ibid). According to this text, our more basic desire is only the desire to be (and be seen as) the equal of other human beings. This is not an arrogant or morally problematic desire. We *are* the equals of others. It is our fear that others will attempt to frustrate this reasonable desire for equality that leads us to desire (preventative) superiority.[35]

In Kant's immediate discussion of the predisposition to humanity, he does not suggest that arrogance or the desire for superiority are the source of our tendency to make use of comparison in our pursuit of happiness. Rather, the former follows from the latter. This means that the text we have examined so far does not explicitly support the Arrogance Account over the Satisfaction Account. Still, it does indicate that human beings will be unable to experience happiness if they are surrounded by others who think little of them or are better off than they are. The explanation of this trait is obvious on the Arrogance Account. If happiness is something we desire under the guise of superiority over others, these conditions will directly contribute to the conclusion that we have not achieved happiness. I will show, however, that Kant does not explain the trait this way. First, I will explain why, on Kant's view, people care about how the state of others compares to their own. Then, I will explain why, in light of this, they also care about the opinions others have of them.

[35] In his argument that the love of honor is morally valuable (not morally problematic) in Kant's moral system, Rudolph Makkreel (2012) asserts that the vices associated with the desire for superiority attach themselves to us 'as reactions to the attempt by others to gain a superiority over us' (107).

2.1 Why Comparing States Matters to Us

The Arrogance Account attributes to Kant the thesis that we want to be better than others partially because we think we deserve this. Wood argues that Kant needs this thesis in order to explain why human beings compare themselves with others. It is not that Wood thinks it strange that human beings use comparison at all. Rather, it is the fact that they tend to direct their comparative powers at other human beings that is remarkable. Wood writes that although there is indeed a basic sense in which humans use comparison, 'Kant thinks that as 'humanity'… is found in the members of *our* rational species… it also essentially involves comparisons of different kind' (1996, 146)—that is, comparison of the sort that 'involves comparing *ourselves* with *other people*' (ibid). Wood's explanation of how we come to compare ourselves with other human beings begins with Kant's retelling of the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden in *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*.

In this text, Kant frames comparison as vital to the (metaphorical) first exercise of reason in human beings. The 'voice of God' in the Biblical story represents, in Kant's version, the natural instincts of the original human animals (8:111). And the moral of the story, in which the first people disobey God, is that 'it is a peculiarity of reason that, aided by imagination, it can invent desires not only *without* a corresponding natural urge, but even *contrary* to it' (ibid). Reason manufactures such desires by allowing humans to compare instinctively desired things to other objects, extending their desire to these new things. The question Wood raises is how the tendency to make these sorts of comparisons could have developed into a tendency to compare one's state with the state of others.

As Wood understands it, this further tendency began with human beings' realization that their ability to transform their desires made them superior to non-rational animals. Kant writes

that after human beings realized this ability within themselves they were 'completely raised…above [their] society with animals' (8:114). At this point, the paradigm human being of Kant's story 'no longer viewed [non-rational animals] as his fellows in creation, but rather as means at his will's disposal and as tools for attaining any chosen ends' (ibid). So, human beings came to understand themselves both as valuable and as *higher in value* than non-rational animals. According to Wood, this simultaneous realization of self-worth and of higher worth is, in Kant's opinion, the basis for a tendency to look at others when assessing our value:

> When the human being thinks of his dignity… by contrasting himself with the other animals, he expresses it in a *comparative* judgment, asserting the superiority of his natural being over that of brutes…. This prepares the way for the self-conceited assertion of his natural superiority over other *rational* beings….' (1999, 241)

Wood's reading of the human transition from innocent rational comparison to a morally problematic tendency to compare oneself with others is a rational reconstruction: In the *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, Kant does not tell us this is what happens. He does not note any tendency for human beings to infer falsely that their new-found superiority extends over other human beings. In fact, he notes exactly the opposite: when human beings realize their superiority over animals in Kant's story, this 'also implies (however vaguely) the thought… that [they] may not [think thusly of] another *human being* but should rather regard the latter as an equal recipient of the gifts of nature' (8:114). Human beings realize their equality with all rational beings (including other human beings) and their superiority over non-rational ones simultaneously.

Why, then, does our predisposition to humanity include a tendency to compare our states with the states of others? Here, it will be helpful to return to Kant's discussion of rational comparisons in the Garden of Eden. Kant writes of the mythological occasion upon which human beings first used comparison to break free from nature:

> Perhaps it was only a fruit, the sight of which invited him, through its similarity with other agreeable fruits that he had already tasted, to experiment. Or perhaps an animal whose nature was fit for the consumption of the fruit also provided an example for him, on whom, however, such consumption had an opposite, harmful effect, and was consequently resisted by a natural instinct in him. (8:112)

In this passage, Kant describes two ways rational comparison can create new desires. We can become attracted to a new, instinctively neutral, object because that object resemble other objects that instinct does recommend (the fruit on the forbidden tree looks like the fruit on other, not forbidden, trees). We can also become attracted to a new object, however, by observing that it is being enjoyed by another being who resembles us in some way (snakes are animals, too).

Other human beings *do* resemble us. When we see them enjoying anything at all, we have some grounds to be curious about how that object might benefit us: a new desire is produced to have the object, or something like it, ourselves. On this basis, we tend to alter our conception of happiness such that it calls for the acquisition of the things we see our neighbors enjoying.[36] On Kant's view, the ideal of happiness presents for us 'the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*' (5:124). In focusing on achieving happiness, we do not merely focus on getting most of the things that we have added into our conception of happiness, but all of them.[37]

The pressure to aspire to achieve what others already have is only greater given our ignorance about what will please us. As Kant puts it:

> Only experience can teach what brings us joy. Only the natural drives… can tell each of us, and each only in his particular way, in what he will *find* those joys; and, in the same way, only experience can teach him the means by which to *seek* them. (6:215) [38]

[36] I say "tend to" because we can imagine a case in which we decide that the cost of this extra pleasure is not worth it to us because of some predictable loss in satisfaction we would suffer for it.
[37] Sonia Sikka (2007) emphasizes the fact that, for Kant, happiness consists primarily in feeling the lack of what one does not yet have, instead of in contented focus on what one has achieved, when she contrasts Kant's view with that of his student Gottfried Herder (see especially 519-521).
[38] See also 5:25-26, 36, and 4:395-396, 417-418.

Facts about the things that will make us happy are empirical and individually variable, and we are liable to make mistakes about them. In such circumstances, looking at what has worked for our neighbors is a sensible strategy.

Kant's retelling of the story of Eden is part of a larger narrative in which he describes the migration of people into cities by reference to just this tendency to want what we see other people enjoying. As he tells it, shortly after agriculture made possible the formation of some small centers of society, shepherds were also enticed to settle down in agricultural towns because of the goods and experiences being enjoyed by those who lived in the cities:

> [I]n time the increasing luxury of the town dwellers, above all, however, the art of pleasing, a matter in which women from the towns far surpassed the unkempt girls of desert, must have been a tremendous attraction for the herdsmen to enter into relations with the former and let themselves be taken in to the glittering misery of the towns. (8:120)

Kant sees no need, in getting this explanation off the ground, to suppose that the herdsmen think that they are more *deserving* of high quality 'pleasing' than the town dwellers.

The catalyst of the transition from comparing objects to comparing states is simply reason itself, given the circumstances that the reasoner is a human being surrounded by other human beings. No further assumptions, in particular no assumptions about a desire to confirm our superiority, are required.

2.2 Why the Opinions of Others Matter to Us

So far, it is clear why happiness would involve interpersonal comparisons even on the Satisfaction Account. Kant's description of the capacity to extend desires by means of comparison makes it clear that comparison with other human beings would be a result of even this basic function. But Kant also claims that '[o]ut of this [comparative] self-love originates the

inclination to gain worth in the opinion of others' (6:27). The next thing to explain, then, is how the tendency to compare could lead us to care about what others think of us.

On Wood's account, we come to care about the opinions of others because we desire to be worth more than they are. Since all rational beings are equal, there is no way for us to actually become worth more than them. The best we can do to approximate actual superiority is to get others to falsely believe we are superior (1999, 263). The opinions of others, then, are valuable to us particularly because opinions can be wrong and so can be used to lend seeming support to our delusions of grandeur.

One problem with this explanation of Kant's text is that it does not seem true to his claim that most fundamentally, our predisposition to humanity only leads us to desire that others not think poorly of us (6:27). Wood's account moves too quickly from the human desire to 'gain worth' in the opinions of others to the distinct desire to gain a *higher worth than we deserve* in the opinions of others. According to Kant, this latter desire can arise from our fear that others will attempt to deny us equal worth, but it is not an immediate part of our concern with opinion.

Another worry about Wood's reading is this: Kant claims that our inclination to gain worth in the opinion of others arises from our tendency to judge ourselves *happy* or not based on whether our condition compares well or poorly with the conditions of others. He does not say that this concern comes directly from our tendency to judge ourselves *valuable* or not based on comparison, as Wood's reading requires. Relatedly, our concern with the opinions of others, on Wood's account, arises in the context of a previously existing desire for superiority, whereas for Kant, the opinions of others are of concern to us independently of any such ambition, on the basis of our desire for (comparatively informed) happiness alone.

On Kant's picture, there are two things that can better explain why the desire for happiness leads to concern about the opinions of others, neither or which implies a need for the Arrogance Account: our dependence upon others instrumentally and our desire for relationships with them.

The good opinion of others is instrumentally valuable to us in several ways. We have seen that our satisfaction with what we have requires that we not be surrounded by others who are enjoying things we lack. If people believe we are inferior to them, though, they are less likely to be uncomfortable with inequalities. This will make attempts to remove inequality more difficult. If others favor us, on the other hand, their good opinion can lead them to want to help us, both in our pursuit of greater social equality and in our endeavors more generally. As long as we have difficult-to-reach goals, then, we have reason to care about others' opinions. Given that we construct our idea of happiness comparatively, what we want is often exactly what others have and know how to acquire. This only makes it clearer why the opinions of others should matter to us.

The good opinions of others are also essential for good relationships with them, which Kant acknowledges we need. Despite their unsociable characteristics, he claims, '[t]he human being is a being meant for society' (6:471). The drive to be in the company of others is so basic that Kant includes it as a component of our mechanical and merely animal self-love (6:26), and he goes so far as to claim that without friendship, human beings feel 'completely alone with [their] thoughts, as in a prison' (6:472). One of the important elements of any human conception of happiness is community and friendship. If we are to fully share ourselves and our lives with others, we cannot allow them to come to dislike us or to believe that we are inferior. Our deeply ingrained desire for relationships with others, along with our clear dependence on their aid in

achieving happiness more generally, is sufficient to explain how human happiness becomes entangled with concerns about what others think.

3. *Unsociable Sociability and the Endlessness of the Search for Happiness*

So far, I have explained how, even if Kant holds the Satisfaction Account, he can still explain why human happiness takes the comparison-based form outlined in the predisposition to humanity and why human beings care so much about the opinions of others. However, another place in which Kant's commitment to human competitiveness is evident is in his claim that people are 'unsociably social.' According to Kant, nature spurs the development of human capacities with this characteristic:

> The means that nature employs in order to bring about the development of all of the predispositions of humans is their antagonism in society…. Here I take antagonism to mean the unsociable sociability of human beings, that is, their tendency to enter into society, a tendency connected, however, with a constant resistance that continually threatens to tear up this society. (8:20)

Kant's claim that human beings are unsociably social seems to speak in favor of the Arrogance Account because anyone who prefers to be around others only in order to be superior to them obviously fits the description 'unsociably social.' [39] This reading of unsociable sociability also explains how our unsociable sociability makes us unlikely to achieve happiness, condemning us to continuously chase it, instead. Because we are unsociably social, so the Arrogance Account claims, we tend to pursue whatever will make us seem superior. However, in order to actually be happy, we must experience pleasure or contentment. These two things do not automatically line up, Wood explains, and the difference between them 'opens up the possibility

[39] Wood explicitly characterizes unsociable sociability in this way. See 2009, 116 (also 1999, 286 and 2001, 272).

that even if we achieved what is represented in [our] idea [of happiness], we would still not be happy' (1996, 147).

The first question is what the Satisfaction Account can say about Kant's claim that human beings are unsociably sociable. Kant describes the 'sociablility' part of this tendency as follows: 'Human beings have an inclination to *associate* with one another because in such a condition they feel themselves to be more human, that is to say, more in a position to develop their natural predispositions' (8:20-1). According to Kant, when we are by ourselves, we are less likely to achieve the ends that are most important to us. We need the support of others in order to have the time and tools to complete the sorts of activities that make us feel like the rational beings we are.

Human unsociability, on the other hand, is the following tendency:

> [Human beings] also have a strong tendency to *isolate* themselves, because they encounter in themselves the unsociable trait that predisposes them to want to direct everything only to their own ends and hence to expect to encounter resistance everywhere, just as they know they tend to resist others. (8:21)

Many commentators associate unsociable sociability with immorality,[40] and this association is natural partially because of the 'unsocial' part of this characteristic. It is natural to think that our moral character is evidenced by our social movement toward others and our immoral tendencies by our antisocial resistance to them,[41] and hence that, as Wood claims 'the content of the [moral]

[40] Chad Wellmon follows Wood in referring to the unsociable sociability of human beings as a 'social malformation of human nature', in which our inclinations 'become evil' (2009, 564). Jeanine Grenberg, who disagrees with the claim that unsociable sociability is the 'source' of radical evil, still holds that it is 'the ultimate expression' of it (2010, 39), and Pablo Muchnik characterizes unsociable sociability as an expression of evil, although he denies that it has its source in culture (2009, xiii-xv). J.B. Schneewind (2009) describes specifically the unsociable part of human nature as evil. Barbara Herman (2009) does not call unsociable sociability evil, attributing it to moral immaturity, but she also writes that human beings 'cannot live without each other (if only to have someone to dominate)' (157). In her review of Muchnik's *Kant's Theory of Evil* (2009), Holly L. Wilson concludes, following the general trend I am describing here, that '[a]lthough the natural predispositions are toward the good, they are characterized in their details by the principle of unsociable sociability, and this principle could still be the sufficient grounding for Kant's belief in the radical propensity for evil' (2012, 463).

[41] As J.B. Schneewind notes (2009, 110), many of Kant's contemporaries thought this way, although not all of them—Thomas Hobbes is one exception (see also *The Leviathan*, chapter 8).

law [is] directly opposed to all the natural-social tendencies present in our unsociable sociability' (2009, 120). However, this intuitive idea is not borne out by Kant's moral theory more generally. Kant claims that '[t]he principle of **mutual love** admonishes [human beings] constantly to *come closer* to one another; that of the **respect** they owe one another, to keep themselves *at a distance* from one another' (6:449). Acting morally well, for Kant, is not only a matter of learning to come closer to and care for others—it is also a matter of learning to stay back.[42] The fact that our unsociability tends to push us away from others, then, is not good evidence that Kant connects it especially to our immorality.

The more pointed question relevant to whether or not Kant's doctrine of unsociable sociability supports the Arrogance Account, however, is whether our unsociable sociability manifests specifically a tendency to arrogance. But our unsociability is not a desire (or manifestation of the desire) for superiority. It is a stubborn desire for happiness. In Kant's description of unsociability, he claims that each of us desires the realization of our own uniquely chosen ends. We want to pursue our happiness, conceived of in our own private way. However, that means getting others to help us. In societies, in which we have to work together with others who have their own wills and desires, sacrificing and delaying our own projects is sometimes necessary. We have a natural resistance to this, which Kant calls our 'unsociability,' but that resistance in itself is not inappropriate. Kant is clear that 'no one else has a right to require of me that I sacrifice my ends if these are not immoral' (6:388). Unsociability is problematic if one allows it to fully dictate one's actions without further assessment, but that is true of all human

[42] Susan Shell (2009) argues that similarly, the ideal state of nature for Kant 'depicts a condition in which the social forces of attraction and repulsion stand in perfect equilibrium' (55)—not a condition in which repulsion has finally been eliminated.

inclination for Kant—to think otherwise would be to think human sensibility is naturally moral, which Kant explicitly denies.

Another fact about human beings that makes them unsociable, aside from their determination to achieve their own happiness, is the fact that they are resistant to the hard work that building a society requires. Kant asserts that being in society makes human beings unhappy partially because of society's failure to satisfy their pleasure-driven animal nature. Society requires each human being to '*cultivate* himself, to *civilize* himself, and to *moralize* himself by means of the arts and sciences,' when he would rather 'give himself over *passively* to the impulses of ease and good living, which he calls happiness[43]' (7:324-325). And the human step out of the state of nature is 'perilous,' according to Kant, in the following sense:

> [I]t drove [the human being] from the harmless and secure condition of childcare… that took care of him without any effort from him and thrust him into the wide world…. From this moment on the arduousness of life will bring him the wish for paradise, a creation of his imagination where he might rest in calm inactivity and perpetual peace and dream and fritter away his existence. (8:114)

Chasing after happiness in society is 'arduous,' and we do not enjoy having to do it. The human being Kant describes here reacts to this condition by retreating into 'a creation of his imagination' in which no effort need be put into his own satisfaction, in which he needs no one and no one needs him: he dreams, essentially, of being completely unsocially happy.

Unsociability is not immoral arrogance—it is simply the tendency not to want to be involved in those aspects of society that are genuinely and understandably unpleasant for us. I do not mean to deny, however, that Kant thinks humans do sometimes come to desire superiority over others. Kant does sometimes note that human beings can come to want domination over others:

[43] This is admittedly an idealistic, dreamy version of happiness, not a real possibility. If we attempted to give ourselves 'passively over' to some of our goals (career goals, for instance), we would fail to achieve them.

> In a civil constitution… *animality* still manifests itself earlier and, at bottom, more powerfully than pure *humanity*…. The human being's self-will is always ready to break out in aversion toward his neighbor, and he always presses his claim to unconditional freedom; freedom not merely to be independent of others, but even to be master over other beings who by nature are equal to him….' (7:327)

However, this desire for unconditional freedom in the form of mastery over others can only be a *result* of our desire for happiness. It is not something that precedes and shapes that desire, as the Arrogance Account requires.

Kant cannot be referring to a desire for superiority for its own sake in this quote because he claims here that the tendency to try to dominate people comes about due to human '*animality*' continuously reemerging in human interaction. But human animality is 'physical or merely *mechanical* self-love, i.e. a love for which reason is not required' (6:26). As we saw earlier, the tendency to care about comparison is not, strictly speaking, even a component of human animality—it a component of *humanity*, in which animality and reason are intermixed. To take the quote above as a reference to the human desire for superiority as such would be to confuse a physical, animal drive, with a much more elaborately social one.[44]

We also have direct evidence that Kant thought human beings tend to value positions of power over others instrumentally, as a way to acquire more means for achieving their happiness—not in a basic way that informs their original understanding of happiness itself. After comparing human societies to bee hives, Kant writes:

> But many such hives next to each other will soon attack each other like robber bees (war); not, however, as human beings do, in order to strengthen their own group by uniting with others—for here the comparison ends—but only to use by cunning or force *others*' industry *for themselves*. Each people seeks to strengthen itself through the subjugation of neighboring peoples, either from the desire to expand or the fear of being swallowed up by the other unless one beats him to it. (7:330)

[44] This is a general problem for Wood's account. In other passages as well, Kant refers to the part of human beings that is resistant to society as the 'animal' part of them (7:325, 327). Wood's reading, however, ties our unsociability closely to the predisposition to humanity and its comparative nature as he understands it—not to our predisposition to animality. (See for example Wood, 2010, 152; 2009, 115; 1999, 288.)

The people of each culture desire to be powerful enough to achieve their goals, and this desire is the primary force behind their tendency to war. Groups dominate each other not because they enjoy finding themselves superior but because domination amounts to security and broader possibilities. Superiority over others can be a valuable instrumental good, even to an agent whose sights are set on nothing more illicit than the realization of their own conception of happiness. If I have power over others, I can force them to do what I want or inspire the kind of admiration that will make them want to do it, simply to please me.

Although nature's aim in instilling human beings with unsociable sociability is to create competition, it does not achieve this end by directly instilling a desire to dominate others. Rather, it gives human beings the desire for a completely independent, unobstructed, and relaxing achievement of happiness while at the same time making them beings for whom this is impossible. This brings me to the second point about unsociable sociability on the Satisfaction Account. I have said that the Arrogance Account's reading of unsociable sociability helps explain Kant's claim that unsociable sociability spurs human beings to realize their potential by making them unhappy. This claim still comes out true on the Satisfaction Account. Even on the Satisfaction Account's version of unsociable sociability, human beings have two conflicting characteristics: we want to freely and easily achieve happiness, but the achievement of happiness, for us, invariably depends upon the help of other free beings. On my reading of unsociable sociability, then, this trait still helps to explain our tendency to be dissatisfied.

In sum, unsociable sociability is a way of being unhappy, not a way of being immoral. The fact that human beings are the kinds of beings who must balance a desire to be effortlessly happy with a desire for harmony with others does lead us to some moral conclusions about them. For example, when being like this *prioritize happiness over morality*, they can be expected by to

try to control and manipulate people in morally suspect ways, instead of simply abandoning all others. But being unsociably social is not identical to making this moral mistake or even a result of having made it, and it does not reveal any innate tendency toward arrogance in the human race as a whole.

4. *Why Bother Bringing Inclinations 'Into a Tolerable System'?*

So far, I have argued that on Kant's theory of human nature, human beings would predictably be competitive even though they are motivated to pursue happiness solely because of the perceived agreeableness of its contents. I have argued that the capacity for rational comparison leads human beings to look for more objects to include in their conceptions of happiness, and that their closeness and similarity to other human beings will lead them to look particularly to what their neighbors have in doing this. I have further argued that human dependence on others draws human beings into the game of trying to win the good opinion of others, even if they are not arrogant, and that they both need and resent having to live and work with others to pursue happiness.

According to Wood, however, this account would be an over-simplification. In fact, he argues that Kant needs to attribute arrogance to human beings in order to explain why they pursue 'happiness' at all, instead of pursuing nothing over and above each object of inclination as it comes along. As Wood puts it:

> [T]he apparently innocent step of introducing an 'idea' of happiness actually involves Kant in a fundamentally new conception of happiness that is not at all the same as pleasure, contentment, or desire-satisfaction, and is quite incompatible with the desire for happiness arising merely from our animal nature… (2001, 269).

Wood is right that it would be too quick to leap directly from merely animal needs and desires to the conclusion that human beings are interested in pursuing happiness. Kant is clear that it is the *rational* animal in particular who pursues happiness.

But Wood does not merely claim that reason is required in order to explain the construction of conceptions of happiness. Rather, he thinks that reason *and the desire for superiority* are needed to explain this construction. According to Wood, Kant's answer to the question 'Why do human beings pursue happiness?':

> locates the original motivation in human nature for the idea of happiness not in our natural but in our social condition, and the social meaning of our natural desires. We consider ourselves happy as a way of thinking of ourselves as better off than other people…. (271).

As Wood explains it, we think in terms of an ideal because an ideal is something we can compare with the achievements of others, the acquisition of which we can boast about.

But flaunting happiness is not be the only, or the most promising, option for claiming superiority. I could conceive of myself as better than others simply by believing that my particular hair color made me the ideal of the human form, or by discounting all negative opinions about myself. Historical examples, from attempted justifications of American slavery to the ideological underpinning for Nazism, confirm that people in fact find this method quite appealing. And we have already seen how difficult it is for people to discover and achieve what will make them happy. It would be safer to believe that one's more stable characteristics are the source of one's superiority. It is true that these methods involve adopting false beliefs, but the belief that happiness can make me superior to others is also a false belief, according to Kant. More importantly, Wood's claim that the pursuit of the ideal of happiness must have a very

different motivation than the less systematic pursuit of inclination does not align with Kant's texts.[45]

Kant explains our desire for happiness simply: 'people have already, of themselves, the strongest and deepest inclination to happiness because it is just in this idea that all inclinations unite in one sum' (4:399). Here, Kant insists that human beings desire happiness because happiness is a collection of many things they desire individually. Further, Kant claims that all finite rational beings (not just prideful human ones) pursue happiness.[46] He also comments that morality cannot require human beings to renounce their happiness, 'for that is something [they] cannot do, just as no finite rational being whatever can' (8:278), and often refers to happiness as though it were attractive to us in the same way the objects of our inclinations are attractive to us: as an object of pleasure. Kant writes that '[t]he principle of one's own happiness… contains no determining ground for the will other than such as is suitable to the *lower* faculty of desire,' where the lower faculty of desire is moved in particular by sensible incentives—that is, the perception that something is agreeable or disagreeable to the senses (5:24). He also writes that empiricism, which places happiness as the determinant of the moral law, is dangerously attractive to human beings precisely because it is 'allied with all the inclinations, which [are]… so favorable to everyone's way of feeling' (5:71), not because it dangles before them the possibility of their being superior to others. And finally, Kant defines the principle of happiness as 'each choosing as he please[s] according to his inclination' (5:126). [47]

Human beings want happiness, according to Kant, because they want its pleasant contents. And this straight-forward view is not so implausible, given Kant's theory of rationality.

[45] Wood (1996, 145) does admit that there is a conflict, but it is more pervasive than he acknowledges.
[46] See also 4:415, 416; 5:25, 61.
[47] Kant also writes that the 'counterweight' to morality in each human being's experience is made up of 'his needs and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name of happiness' (4:405).

For Kant, the fact that human beings are rational beings with wills means they have the capacity to 'act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles' (4:412). This yields a connection between the desire to pursue any one object of inclination and a tendency to adopt a *rule* (or principle for action) according to which those things that satisfy inclination should be looked after in general: in other words, a rule to pursue happiness. Alison Hills (2009) explains the connection:

> [I]f you regard yourself as having reason to satisfy a desire, you should acknowledge that other desires, both now and in the future, have some normative claim on you as well. You should try not to pursue your current desires in such a way that this rules out satisfying the desire that you think that you will have in the future. (41)

Hills argues that reason requires our pursuit of happiness because it demands that, in claiming that any one desire provides us with a reason to pursue the object of that desire, we admit that desires in general are the sorts of things that might provide us with reasons. This, by itself, prudentially pressures us to focus on happiness as a whole, instead of on each desire as it comes along.

Barbara Herman (2007) describes a further dimension of the capacity to reason that connects the pursuit of particular objects with the pursuit of happiness. In addition to making us think in principled ways, rationality also makes us think about the future:

> Because we are rational *and* possess imagination, we not only can conceive of doing and feeling otherwise than we do, we recognize that we have a future whose shape we are able to affect. We come to have the concept of our life, something we can foresee will go along and be pleasurable, or not, depending (partly) on the wisdom of our choices. (182)

Our capacity to reason opens a point of view for us that reveals our existence across time, instead of only in the moment. This complicates the picture enough for us that our pursuit of the sensibly satisfying can no longer get along without a conception of happiness.

We cannot help but realize that our desires are changeable and potentially in conflict with each other in the long-run. The only way to mitigate this is to develop a conception of happiness. This aspect of rationality is acknowledged by Kant:

> The third stage of reason, after it had meddled with the immediately felt needs [of human beings], was the conscious *anticipation of the future*. This ability to enjoy not just the current moment in life but also to represent to oneself the future, often far in advance… [is] the most inexhaustible source of worry and distress…. (8:113).

In conclusion, Kant asserts that the simple addition of reason (arrogance not included) to our finite nature is enough to lead us from the tendency to pursue inclination all the way to a concern about happiness,[48] and his theory provides us with a plausible picture of how.

5. *What's Wrong with Happiness?*

Kant has the resources, without the Arrogance Account, to explain his commitment to the predisposition to humanity as he defines it and to the claim that human beings are unsociably social. He also has the resources, with the Satisfaction Account alone, to explain our tendency to make use of an ideal of happiness in the first place. But part of the appeal of the Arrogance Account is that it can help explain what is bad, in a common-sense way, about putting happiness first. Although no empirical principle is fit to ground the moral law, Kant claims, '[t]he principle of *one's own happiness* is the most objectionable' (4:442); '[t]he direct opposite of the principle

[48] None of this should be taken to lead to the conclusion that human beings will always, according to Kant, have the desire to secure happiness in the sense that most securely tracks their true, long-term well-being as animals. What I have argued here is only that Kant can explain why human beings come to be concerned with an ideal of happiness in general (that is, a collection or system of inclinations instead of a mere procession of them one at a time). I have not argued that we can expect this ideal to always include a long and healthy life or other things we might think of as essential components of our physical well-being as animals. Pinheiro Walla (2015) argues, for instance, that there is nothing prudentially irrational about Kant's gout-sufferer's rejection of his long-term health (or his "objective" happiness) in the *Groundwork* because the life-style change required to secure his health would cost him enough in satisfaction to make it really not worth it in terms of satisfaction alone (or in terms of his "subjective" happiness) (38). I do not intend to have said anything that would resist that conclusion.

of morality is the principle of *one's own* happiness made the determining ground of the will' (5:35). It seems that Kant finds something particularly dangerous about taking conformity with the pursuit of happiness as one's primary principle for action, and the Arrogance Account provides a clear reason why. According to the Arrogance Account, at the root of the human desire for happiness is an attempt to gain a status one could not possibly deserve, fueled by false, arrogant beliefs.

If this explanation is not correct, then what, really, is especially wrong with our tendency to make use of the principle of happiness as though it were our principle of morality? The truth is that there is not much the Satisfaction Account can tell us about why Kant finds this so problematic. That, however, is as it should be. The only way to fully justify Kant's stance on this issue is to explicate the role Kant thinks morality is supposed to play in human lives. Only with a better understanding of what the moral law *does* for us can we see clearly why the principle of happiness cannot do the same.[49] Because it is a reading only of Kant's theory of human happiness, the Satisfaction Account does not bring us all the way to a full account of this problem. What the Satisfaction Account does make clear is the following: simply because they are rational and subject to inclination, human beings want, in a powerful and basic way, to become happy—and their experience with pursuing happiness teaches them that it is frustratingly

[49] One way of understanding the role morality plays in human lives, according to Kant, is as follows: for any free and rational being (human beings included), the moral law lays out what that being must do in order to act out its freedom effectively, without undermining itself. Janelle Dewitt (2013) develops this notion of fit between morally right actions and our free nature in her account of respect, and Seiriol Morgan (2008) also holds that this is one essential function of morality according to Kant. In Luciana Samamé's (2013) analysis of Kant's three arguments against the suitability of the principle of happiness to be a moral law, she also argues that Kant rejects it partially because of its insufficiency for completely realizing our humanity. Our inclinations cannot serve as a guaranteed substitute for the moral law because they track the well-being (or at least the satisfaction, which sometimes does not even amount to the true well-being) of only part of us (the sensible part). Gary Watson (1983) hits upon this point when he explains: "In Kant's theory, the true antagonist to morality is not happiness or self-regard, but our persistent tendency to evaluate our lives solely from the point of view of ourselves as creatures of natural need, governed by pleasure and pain" (85).

and perpetually elusive. Given these facts, it seems plausible that part of the special danger of subbing in the principle of happiness for the moral law is simply the undeniable attractiveness of this substitution to human beings.

The Satisfaction Account is meant only to capture what Kant thinks about what human happiness is and why human beings want it. For Kant, capturing these aspects of human life does not yet capture human goodness or evil. Our desire for happiness just simply is not the same thing as our moral compass—and that, however we spell out the details, is Kant's reason for insisting that we should not act as though it were. As Kant writes, '[t]he majesty of duty has nothing to do with the enjoyment of life… and even though one might want to shake both of them together thoroughly, so as to give them blended, like medicine, to the sick soul, they soon separate of themselves' (5:211).

Conclusion

In conclusion, although the Arrogance Account can provide an explanation of Kant's assertion that human beings are competitive, we can use a simpler story about the human desire for happiness to explain even these features of human beings. On this story, happiness is originally attractive to human beings not because they are arrogant, but because they are finite creatures with rational capacities that multiply their desires, reshape those desires in complex ways, and make it impossible to live in the moment without an eye to future consequences. Aside from serving as a reading of Kant on human happiness, the Arrogance Account has also shaped the way many scholars understand Kant's theory of immorality. The Satisfaction Account, then, brings with it the opportunity to reassess Kant's theory of

immorality and to approach his moral theory as a whole from a different angle, as a theory that is meant not only to reign in arrogance, but also to teach human beings how to understand their own importance and dignity—and so, to uplift them.

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PAPER THREE

At Arm's Length: Kant on Self-Respect

Catherine Smith

Introduction

It is no secret that respect is an important part of Immanuel Kant's moral theory. When people draw upon Kant, they often draw in particular on his claim that humanity is to be respected. To take just one example, Denis G. Arnold and Norman E. Bowie (2003) make use of Kant's claim that human beings must be respected to critique the use of sweatshop labor. According to these authors, Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative (which instructs us to never use humanity, whether in the person of ourselves or others, as a mere means to some end) is both compelling enough to stand on its own and essential for understanding what is really wrong with this practice. My project here will be to raise and address a problem for this often-referenced aspect of Kant's theory. Respect as a moral concept has certainly not gone uncriticized,[50] and Kant's conception of and emphasis on respect in particular have been the focal point of objections to his moral theory.[51] The problem with which I will begin, however, is a new one, and it bears specifically on Kant's use of the notion of *self*-respect.

Kant holds that human beings have a moral obligation to act in accordance with proper respect for themselves (6:403). He also holds that it is an important condition of our receptivity

[50] One such criticism notes that calls for "self-respect" are often invoked as a tool to blame the victims of injustice for their treatment, as when women are told that proper self-respect requires modesty and that their supposed lack of modesty (and hence of self-respect) is what leads men to be sexually aggressive toward them, or young black men are told that people would respect them if they first "respected" themselves (often with the assumption that this would involve dressing more formally).

[51] Some examples, all of which I will touch on in a bit more detail later in the paper, include Michael Neumann (2000), Robin S. Dillon (1995), Rae Langton (1992), Julia Annas (1984), Susan Wolf (1982), and Friedrich Schiller (1793).

to morality that the moral law be capable of calling up our self-respect (6:399). Commentators have often read Kant as *also* holding that the most serious obstacle to virtue for human beings is self-indulgent arrogance. And this reading is not without pull. Kant claims that one of the major flaws in human beings, which the moral law has to strike down in order to call up respect, is "self-conceit" (5:73), and it is a prominent part of his theory of human nature that human beings have a tendency to try to dominate and one-up each other.[52] This reading is also not so strange to our everyday thinking about immorality. It is somewhat natural to think that immoral people are arrogant.

However, Kant's emphasis on self-respect does not sit easily with this view of immorality. It looks, on the face of it, as though a theorist who holds that human beings are deeply arrogant would also hold that we should exercise some caution in how much we dwell on the moral importance of self-respect. Surely beings who tend to think they are much better than those around them do not *need* any reminder that they are important. And in fact, impressing upon them the importance of acting self-respectfully would seem to run the risk of encouraging them to double-down on the arrogant thinking towards which they are always tending. Jeanine Grenberg (2005) raises this point in her argument that the primary Kantian self-regarding virtue is humility. As she puts it, "[t]o emphasize the moral necessity of self-respect for a kind of being who already has a tendency to place self-love above morality is a dangerous thing indeed" (184-5).

The trouble is that Kant seems to be doing just this dangerous thing. He claims that it is not only respect for the law and for others that the moral law impresses upon us, but respect for

[52] Commentators who have recognized and catalogued this aspect of Kant's theory include J. B. Schneewind (2009), Barbara Herman (2009), and Allen Wood (2001, 1999, 1996), among others. I argue elsewhere (contra Allen Wood) [Paper Two] that Kant can explain this part of his theory without recourse to the claim that human beings have a tendency toward arrogance.

ourselves, writing that "the law within [the human being] unavoidably forces from him *respect* for his own being" (6:403; see also 5:87). In his discussion of the effect that our awareness of our moral obligations has on us, he writes that the moral law's "subjective effect on feeling… [can] be called *self-approbation*" (5:81). The problem is worse still because Kant also claims that our duties to ourselves, duties that are run through with calls to self-respect, are the most important ones of all (27:340-341). In light of the prevalent reading of Kant's theory of immorality, these passages ring just about as oddly as would passages announcing that the moral law calls up in human beings a direct appreciation for their happiness.

In this paper, I will explain how and why Kant conceives of self-respect and the duty to act according to it as morally essential. In order to do this, I will propose revisions of how we read Kant's theory from both sides. First, on the side of Kant's theory of immorality, I will present the view that Kant thinks immorality is arrogant (or self-conceited) only in a somewhat technical sense, and one that does not always correlate with what I call "interpersonal" arrogance. Interpersonal arrogance is the kind of arrogance in which a person thinks they are worth more than other people. On Kant's view, our immoral behavior is arrogant because it involves an overestimation of human nature—but this overestimation does not always lead us to positive assessments of ourselves (as worth much), as I will explain. Second, on the side of Kant's theory of morality, I will argue that we should understand Kantian self-respect not merely as a valuing attitude, but as a specific *type* of valuing attitude that is appropriate for human beings to have toward themselves because they are both moral and animal. This way of valuing oneself stands in direct contrast to the kind of self-valuing we find in self-conceit.

One major criticism of Kant's theory of self-respect has been that "respecting" oneself in Kant's way involves distinguishing between one's animal and one's purely rational self and

problematically downplaying or ignoring the former. My reading of Kant on respect will also provide a new reply to this objection. Commentators have often defended Kant from this charge by pointing to evidence in his texts that he considered harmony between morality and animality an important part of human virtue—emphasizing, for instance, his support for the cultivation of emotions that line up well with morality. [53] There is something unsatisfying about this type of solution, however. There is plentiful evidence in Kant's texts that he considered the *disharmony* between animality and morality an important component of the human relationship with morality. Kant has also often been criticized for precisely this emphasis on disharmony. For example, Kant's contemporary, Friedrich Schiller, raised the concern that Kant's theory would lead people to associate morality with struggle and suffering. The account of self-respect I offer in this paper embraces the disharmony aspect of Kant's theory in full, and I will explain how such an account need not (and in fact cannot) encourage human beings to disown or disregard their animality. In the process, I also hope to offer a more positive way of thinking about Kant's emphasis on disharmony itself. First, I will turn to Kant's claim that immorality involves self-conceit.

1. Self-Conceited Immorality

1.1 Exchanging the Moral Law for Self-Love

Kant claims that immorality is self-conceited. But what does this mean? "Self-conceit" is a tendency Kant claims the moral law must strike down in human beings in order to call up their

[53] See Anne Margaret Baxley (2010), Paul Formosa (2010), Sandra Fairbanks (2000), Paul Guyer (1993).

respect for morality (5:73).[54] It serves as an important obstacle to human virtue, then, and a correct understanding of it should provide insight into the sense in which Kant thinks immorality involves arrogance. Kant is clear that self-conceit is connected to our inclinations. Before going into more detail about how, it will be helpful to briefly discuss what "inclinations" are, according to Kant. Inclination (*Neigung*) is Kant's word for our animal desires—physical in that they motivate us typically by means of pleasure and pain. These desires are determined by contingent factors like our body chemistry, how we were brought up, and the causal sequence of events leading to a given moment in our lives. It is important to note, though, that the category of animal desire is extremely broad, for Kant. On Kant's understanding of human nature, even our merely animal desires include complex social components (particularly because we are *rational* animals). We form a conception of happiness by gathering all the inclinations we can into a consistent set.[55] Because the moral law, unlike our inclinations, is determined purely by reason, there is no guarantee that we will ever be inclined (want) to do what we are morally required to do. Acting morally well will not necessarily promote our happiness. In this sense, inclination and the fact that we are subject to it leads to an always-possible resistance to the moral law in us.

When we are self-conceited, however, our inclinations "constitute" or "make-up" (*ausmachen*) our self-satisfaction or self-esteem (5:73). It is not obvious how inclinations could do this. The esteem of self-esteem is a positive judgment that is unlike merely liking something. In order to *esteem* something we need to think that the positive judgment we have about the

[54] This is true, at least, of the instance of it under discussion here. I do not think that Kant always uses the word self-conceit (*Eigendünkel*) in precisely the same way. He uses it to describe a variety of tendencies, attitudes or behaviors with the common trait of treating something as though it were worth more than it actually is. The instance of self-conceit under discussion here, though, is a tendency which Kant holds is part of human immorality in general. This is evidenced by the role it plays in the process that calls up our respect for the moral law, a feeling Kant claims is *a priori* possible for all of us.

[55] Kant writes that it is in the "idea [of happiness] that all inclinations unite in one sum" (4:399); and he also uses this definition in the following aside: "All the inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness)" (5:73).

object in question has been *earned.* The question Kant's definition of self-conceit raises, then, is: How could human beings ever get from a collection of their wants and needs to a conclusion about the esteem they have earned for themselves?

On my reading,[56] the way we do this is as follows. We take the conception of happiness we are able to construct with our inclinations, and instead of using that as an ideal to inform what we should do to make ourselves better off, we use it as a road-map for what we must do in order to earn worth for ourselves and add value to our lives. Hence, we tend to think that as we are gaining happiness for ourselves, we are also earning worth. This way of understanding self-conceit fits well with what Kant says about the error that underlies the problematic tendency. Kant's description of the error is below. In it, he first describes a separate propensity called self-love, and then proceeds to describe self-conceit.

Here is Kant's description:

> [The] propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general can be called *self-love*; and if self-love makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-conceit*. (5:74)

When Kant refers to "oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice" in this passage, he is referring to human beings as beings who are subject to contingent, private desires. Basically, this phrase refers to the human being conceived of as a human animal, subject to inclinations. In self-love, we take ourselves, conceived of in this way, and make that into "the objective determining ground of the will in general." That is: we allow ourselves as human animals to determine the facts about what we really ought to do in a given case. My gloss on

[56] Elsewhere [Paper One], I argue that this reading is the correct understanding of what Kant means when he discusses self-conceit, in contrast to other proposals. Here, however, my goal is to show how this reading of self-conceit can help us understand what Kant means by (and finds important about) self-respect, so I will simply present the reading instead of arguing for it. That being said, the fact that this reading of self-conceit can help us understand self-respect's importance in Kant's theory constitutes, I think, a separate argument in favor of it.

self-love, then, is that it is the tendency to think that one *should* act in ways that satisfy or look after one's happiness.

Kant does not think that self-love is, in itself, problematic. It would not be a good idea for us to never follow the line of reasoning from what we want to what we should do. In self-conceit, however, we take this tendency and we elevate it into an "unconditional practical principle." Our next task, then, if we are to understand what self-conceit is, will be to determine what it means to make something into an unconditional practical principle. According to Kant, the only truly unconditional practical principle—that is, the only thing we must conform to no matter what else we do—is the moral law. In allowing self-love to play this role, what we are really doing is allowing self-love to play the role that morality is supposed to play in our lives. To understand what self-conceit is, we must have a clear picture of this role.

1.2 Kant on Morality's Role

One way of thinking about the role that morality is supposed to play in our lives is as a regulator of our interactions with others. On this way of thinking about morality, it primarily restricts our otherwise unconstrained pursuit of our own interests such that we do not trample the interests of others. If this were the main function of morality, then allowing self-love to step into this role would seem quite straight-forwardly to constitute interpersonal arrogance. In exchanging the moral law for self-love, I would simply be allowing facts about what is best for my *own* happiness to determine the rules for how I interact with and treat *others*.

However, this understanding of the role of morality in our lives, and consequently this characterization of what it means to place self-love in that role, is too narrow to capture Kant's view. Kant does not think that the moral law has only—or even most centrally—the role of

regulating our interactions with others. On Kant's view, the moral law also regulates our actions in view of *ourselves*. In fact, Kant believes that one's duties to oneself are particularly important. He writes in the *Lectures on Ethics* that:

> [N]o part of morals has been more defectively treated than [that] of the duties to oneself… it has been considered a trifling matter, and mentioned only at the end, as a supplement to morality, in the belief that once a man has fulfilled all his duties, he may finally also think about himself. So far from these duties being the lowest, they actually take first place, and are the most important of all (27:340-341).

If the role morality plays is just as much about regulating how we act with regards to ourselves as it is about regulating how we act with regards to others, then we require a different characterization of that role than the one with which we started.

Luckily, Kant does give an alternative characterization of this role. As we have already seen, Kant considers it to be of central importance that the moral law gives us directions we are to follow no matter what else we want or do. The role morality plays in our lives, according to Kant, is that of being our "vocation" (Kant refers to the fulfillment of morality as our vocation (*Bestimmung*) in various places: 4:396; 5:87; 6:437; 8:39, 287-288). Fulfilling the moral law is, you might say, the most important job of our lives. Tied up with this claim, for Kant, is the claim that our ability to fulfill it is the source of the worth of humanity. As Kant explains in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* without moral goodness, all the other kinds of goodness are undermined. He claims that "[i]t is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a **good will**" (4:393) and that, by contrast, "*talents* of mind" and "qualities of *temperament*" may be "desirable for many purposes, but they can also be extremely evil and harmful if the will which is to make use of these gifts…is not good" (4:393).

When we allow self-love to play the role in our lives that morality is supposed to play, then, we think and act as though it were self-love and not morality, that were our vocation—as though fulfilling *it* instead of the moral law were the source of our worth. At this point, I can offer a full characterization of my reading of self-conceit and hence of the sense in which, according to Kant, immorality always involves arrogance. Self-conceit is satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with oneself premised solely on how happy one is, based in the implicit belief that one's self-love is the most important vocation of one's life. On this reading of self-conceit, the tendency is still, in a sense, arrogant, as I will explain in section 3. However, it does not always lead to interpersonal arrogance. On Kant's view, as I will explain next, immorality is not always self-affirming.

2. How Making Happiness our Vocation Fails to be Self-Affirming

Self-conceit cannot be exactly the same as interpersonal arrogance. This is so because self-conceit involves basing one's self-esteem on one's level of happiness, and this level is not guaranteed to be satisfactory. Although self-conceit would lead to interpersonal arrogance for people who were generally better off than those around them, it would tend to produce exactly the opposite effect in less fortunate circumstances: it would make it more difficult for us to believe that we were beings of any worth, due any kind of respect. And cases of relative unhappiness are not nonexistent, according to Kant.

In fact, we have reason to think that on his view dissatisfaction is more commonplace than happiness. The pursuit of inclination, according to Kant, is marked for the most part by *failures* to satisfy ourselves. Kant often characterizes the human relationship to inclination as a

stressful one. He claims, for instance, that "the inclinations themselves, as sources of needs, are so far from having an absolute worth… that it must instead be the universal wish of every rational being to be altogether free from them" (4:428) and elsewhere that inclinations "are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and though he cannot lay them aside, they wrest from him the wish to be rid of them" (5:118). These kinds of claims are sometimes presented as evidence that Kant thought inclination (and the animal aspect of us in which it inheres) is meaningless and or to be disowned. Both of these quotes also come from within the context of Kant's moral writings, which might suggest that his point here is simply that inclinations make acting morally well more difficult.

In fact, however, Kant makes these claims in light of a broader view of inclination according to which chasing after it is a high-stakes and losing game—one we cannot opt out of. In discussing the nature of pleasure and pain in his anthropological writings, Kant raises the question whether the feeling of pleasure is a positive increase in pleasant feeling or rather only the ceasing of pain. He concludes that the former is impossible[57] (7:232). Kant's rationale for the conclusion that pleasure can only be a temporary lessening of pain is a technical one—that increases in pleasure are increases in energy, and so if we were to continuously experience such increases we would basically combust. As he puts it, "what else but a quick death from *joy* would follow from a continuous promotion of the vital force" (7:231). For our purposes, however, it is significant that Kant is led to the conclusion that we experience pleasure only because we are driven out of whatever state we were previously in by pain and hence, "*pain must always*

[57] Kant cites his agreement on this point with Count Pietro Verri. This aspect of Kant's understanding of inclination has been noted by other commentators. It is explicated, for example, by Sonia Sikka (2007) in her comparison of Kant with his student Johann Gottfried von Herder, and by Rachel Zuckert (2002). Gary Watson (1983) also notes that the pursuit of inclination is characterized by displeasure, not satisfaction, according to Kant. This view of inclination is also not surprising in a person who had Kant's personal experience with embodiment. As Susan Meld Shell (1996) details, he suffered physical pain relatively consistently throughout his life, because of what he self-diagnosed as "hypochondria."

precede every enjoyment; pain is always first" (7:231). Nature, according to Kant, has set us up such that contentment, even contentment "from the pragmatic point of view (being content with the well-being that [one] intends to secure through skill and prudence)" is "unattainable" for us—our incentive for action is "pain... that [we] cannot escape from" (7:234-235).

We can also see that Kant thinks our pursuit of inclination is marked by struggle in his characterization of the pursuit of happiness more directly. The achievement of happiness is perpetually uncertain for human beings, on Kant's view. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he describes our desire for happiness as a "problem" for us:

> [S]atisfaction with one's whole existence is not, as it were, an original possession and a beatitude, which would presuppose a consciousness of one's independent self-sufficiency, but is instead a problem imposed upon him by his finite nature itself, because he is needy (5:25).

Here Kant explains that our happiness is, in a sense, a troublesome preoccupation for us. This is so because we are not "self-sufficient" beings. Our conception of happiness includes the acquisition of things outside of us, over which we have limited control. Even to the extent that we know exactly what we want, then, we may find ourselves unable to achieve it.

More than this, Kant claims that our happiness is also something of a moving target—our wants are usually in the process of changing and multiplying. This is a natural result of the fact that we have rational capacities that can meddle with our wants as well as our ideas about how to fulfill them. Rationality allows human beings to multiply and extend their desires beyond what non-rational animals experience, making human happiness more elusive than say, rabbit happiness. In the "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," Kant claims that the fact that

human beings are rational thrusts them into "a series of... afflictions" that might even be conceived of as a "punishment" (8:115).[58]

When we imagine a life dedicated to the pursuit of inclination, we might imagine a life of luxury and ease. For Kant, however, this image is a fantasy. Kant is unwilling to claim that human beings can be made perfectly happy simply by acting morally well, and he often emphasizes cases of moral action that require the sacrifice of things wanted. But this does not indicate, as it might initially seem, that Kant grants the other side of the coin: that immorality is in some sense a faster and easier route to happiness and a satisfied life. On Kant's theory of human nature, there simply is, for most of us in most situations, no such route at all—immoral or not.

Self-conceit is not the same as interpersonal arrogance because in falling prey to self-conceit, we conceive of success in the highly contingent and failure-prone mission for happiness as the vocation of our lives and the thing on which our worth depends. It is only with a fair bit of luck that self-conceit could lead us to think we are worth more than others. By itself, this already relieves some of the tension between Kant's claim that immorality involves self-conceit and his claim that self-respect is especially morally important, since it is already clear that Kant's view of immorality does not entail that most people already have a strong sense of their own value, standing in need only of the reminder that others matter, too. Still, we need to go further. Kant does not say that the moral law calls up self-respect particularly in the *unhappy*. Self-respect is supposed to be important across the board. In order to see why it is, I will turn next to the sense in which self-conceit *is* a kind of arrogance.

[58] He also puts a similar doctrine forward in his "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective," claiming that the progress and innovation that are so important to rational development in human beings are driven in part by perpetual unhappiness.

3. *The Arrogance of Self-Conceit and the Human Relationship to Morality*

Being self-conceited is not the same as thinking you are superior to others. Still, it remains a kind of arrogance, for Kant, because of the assumptions self-conceited agents make about their relationship to the moral law. Here is Kant on the proper form of that relationship:

> The moral level on which a human being… stands is respect for the moral law. The disposition incumbent upon him to have in observing it is to do so from duty, not from voluntary liking or even from an endeavor he undertakes unbidden, gladly and of his own accord; and his proper moral condition, in which he can always be, is *virtue*, that is, moral disposition *in conflict*, and not *holiness* in the supposed *possession* of a complete *purity* of dispositions of the will. (5:84)

In this passage, Kant offers two different models for how a person might be oriented toward the moral law. We can call these, following Kant, the respectful and the holy model of morality. Persons who are respectful in relation to the moral law conform to it, as he explains, in conflict with themselves, with a certain amount of internal resistance. Persons who are holy in relation to the moral law, by contrast, do what is morally right in full harmony with themselves—they act well and "gladly."

Kant insists that of these two models, human beings must operate on the respectful model. He does not mean by this that we experience resistance to the moral law in every case. Kant does not hold that we never happen to want to do what is also the morally right thing to do. The mere fact that I find something enjoyable does not amount to evidence that that thing *is* morally problematic—it simply also does not amount to evidence that it is *not*. Our resistance to morality is also not resistance to morality as such. In other words, we do not feel reluctant to fulfill our moral obligations *because* that would be the right thing to do. If we had this attitude toward morality, it would amount to what Kant refers to in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* as "malice," which he claims is properly "diabolical" and not human (6:37). The

resistance experienced in the respectful model of moral action is something more general than either of these. When we commit ourselves to morality, we do so in the awareness that our obligations will never be guaranteed to line up with that other goal that will never fail to matter to us: our happiness. Our moral action is not harmonious.

Kant's insistence that human moral action is to some degree conflicted is not limited to those passages in which he raises the contrasting possibility of having a holy will. Rather, it runs throughout his discussion of morality and shapes the very basic concepts he uses. Kant consistently discusses morality in terms of "duty." He does this because conceiving of the moral law as one's duty is integral to keeping oneself in a respectful orientation toward it. Kant's description of the concept of duty itself refers to the fact that the moral law is constraining:

> The very *concept of duty* is already the concept of a *necessitation* (constraint) of free choice through the law…. The moral *imperative*[59] makes this constraint known through the categorical nature of its pronouncement (the unconditional ought). Such constraint, therefore, does not apply to rational beings as such (there could also be *holy* ones) but rather to *human beings*, rational *natural* beings, who are unholy enough that pleasure can induce them to break the moral law, even though they recognize its authority; and even when they do obey the law, they do it *reluctantly* (in the face of opposition from their inclinations), and it is in this that such *constraint* properly consists. (6:379)

It is an integral component of Kant's moral theory, then, that human beings have a disharmonious and hence respectful relationship with the moral law, where this involves valuing the moral law as something constraining and disharmonious with oneself. Self-conceit amounts

[59] The fact that human beings must act morally under constraint is also the source of Kant's discussion of the moral law as an imperative. "Imperative" is, for Kant a technical term that means something like "command." Its use makes explicit reference to the fact that the agent subject to the command might not want to obey it. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant introduces imperatives explicitly as the form that laws take when "reason solely by itself does not adequately determine the will [of the person to whom the law applies, i.e.] if [their] will is exposed also to subjective conditions (certain incentives) that are not always in accord with objective ones" (4:412). The moral law takes imperatival form for us specifically *because* we are not "holy" beings, but beings who are capable of being moved by a sensibility that does not necessarily track the moral law (see also 5:32). Kant makes this point again in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, when he explains that "for a being in whom reason quite alone is not the determining ground of the will, [the moral law] is an *imperative*, that is, a rule indicated by an 'ought'" (5:20).

to a kind of arrogance because self-conceited individuals run afowl of this by leaping immediately from facts about what they most want and need to conclusions about what kinds of things give them moral worth. In making this leap, they implicitly assume that there is a harmony between these things, when in reality, there is not. They deliberate as though their wills were holy.

Kant had often been criticized for the emphasis on disharmony that makes it so clear why he rejects self-conceit. For example, Kant's contemporary, Friedrich Schiller (1793), raises the concern that Kant's emphasis on duty gives the impression that morality involves a constant war with one's nature. Such a view, Schiller worries, encourages people to associate moral behavior with misery and self-punishment. Schiller recommends instead that Kant should encourage his readers to aspire to what Schiller calls "the beautiful soul" (151). [60] This model is meant to achieve not just dignity, but also the "grace" mentioned in Schiller's title. The beautiful soul is a moral agent whose sensible desires have come to harmonize with their moral obligations so fully

[60] My focus here is on Kant's view, not Schiller's, so I am not exploring in full how the best reading of Kant and the best reading of Schiller distinguish them from each other—it may turn out that on a sophisticated reading of both there is no very large difference, as Kant himself suggests in his reply to Schiller (6:23fn). As Anne Margaret Baxley (2010) points out, however, Kant's concession in this same reply is only that a happy exterior can sometimes serve as an indicator of a more full-fledged inner commitment to morality. This does not fully endorse Schiller's claim, which was that virtue is not complete without harmony between one's sensibility and moral obligations. Jeffrey Barnouw (1980) also argues that there remains an important distinction between Schiller's and Kant's approach, which is evident in their differing approaches to the aesthetic experiences of the sublime and the beautiful. Whereas Schiller generally aims to undermine distinctions between what might seem like different experiences or ways of being (the sublime and the beautiful; acting out of desire and acting out of duty), Kant is dedicated to preserving such distinctions in their opposition. Reed Winegar (2013) argues that Kant's more complete response to Schiller addresses the other philosopher's concern by insisting that the moral law can still be conceived of as something *constraining* without our perceiving this constraint as *oppressive*. This reply by Kant relies heavily, according to Winegar, on Kant's theory of the sublime as an aesthetic experience. Winegar's reading is further supported by some interesting differences between Schiller's description of the beautiful soul and Kant's description of the appropriately uplifted virtuous attitude. When Kant grants to Schiller that joy seems most appropriate to the aesthetic of virtue, the way he puts the point is that the "*aesthetic* constitution" or "*temperament*" of moral action would have to be "courageous and hence cheerful", not "weighed down by fear and dejected" (6:23fn). Schiller's description of the beautiful soul, by contrast, involves a "gentle heart," a complete lack of "tension," and a musical voice, none of which seem particularly to be a paradigmatic part of the courageous cheer to which Kant refers. With the association Kant also draws between courage and the sublime, these differences seem to further suggest Winegar's reading.

that the concept of duty is no longer really essential to their moral actions. They are still subject to moral duty, technically speaking, but able to fulfill their duty fully out of love, and happily. This model of moral action, I suggest, comes closer to the model we see in Kant's "holy" will, in which the agent acts morally well and enjoys doing so.

There is certainly something appealing about this model. And understandably, others have been sympathetic to the worry that Kant's theory associates morality with inner struggle and misery. Hegel accused Kant of "producing a view of morality as nothing but a bitter, unending, struggle against self-satisfaction" (84), for example. More recent scholars have also raised this worry. Susan Wolf (1982) argues that the saint of the Kantian moral ideal would, if we met such a person in real life, seem to us to suffer from "a pathological fear of damnation… or an extreme form of self-hatred that interferes with his ability to enjoy the enjoyable life" (424).[61] Julia Annas (1984) argues that the dedication to duty demanded by Kant's ethics leads to a life empty of meaning and destructive of relationships, and Rae Langton (1992) raises the challenge that Kant has underestimated the importance of inclination to living a valuable human life.

These criticisms have a strong pull in the world of moral theory and of Kant interpretation. It seems to many philosophers that it is a deficiency in a moral theory if it fails to address the importance of bringing one's emotions in line with duty (or vice versa) and, in that sense, making moral behavior more natural to oneself. Kant scholars have pushed back on Kant's behalf for the most part by pointing out that he cares more about aligning one's feelings and desire for happiness with morality than is sometimes supposed.[62] And it is true that Kant does

[61] Wolf does not argue in favor of the beautiful soul in this paper, however. She sees *that* ideal of moral sainthood as problematic, too, although in a different way.
[62] See Anne Margaret Baxley (2010), Paul Formosa (2010), Sandra Fairbanks (2000), Paul Guyer (1993).

not completely reject the value of the holy model of moral action. This is evident, for instance, in the passage right after he claims that human beings should aim for respect, not liking, for the moral law. There, Kant grants that "holiness of will is nevertheless a practical *idea*, which must necessarily serve as a *model* to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end" (5:32-33).

Harmonious moral action is valuable as an ideal to strive after in the long term, for Kant. This is also evident in his doctrine of the highest good. The highest good is the "object" of morality, according to Kant—the goal we reasonably strive for with our moral actions, and which we implicitly assume must be possible (5:107-110). Although the highest good requires moral perfection above all, Kant claims that the moral perfection of human beings is not enough on its own to constitute "the complete good" as conceived of by beings like us—"for this," he explains, "*happiness* is also required" (5:110). Hence, the complete ideal for which we ultimately strive in our moral actions, according to Kant, is "virtue and happiness together" (5:110) with each still being conceived of as distinct from the other (5:111-13). Kant's insistence on including the actual achievement of happiness harmonized with moral behavior in his conception of the highest good again indicates that he does not mean to spurn the value of harmonizing sensibility and morality entirely.

The holy model of moral action is not entirely absent from Kant's system, then. But its role is as an ideal—something always in the distance, to be approached, instead of something we should ever consider fully realized in or applicable to everyday actions. It is important not to underplay Kant's continued emphasis on duty and disharmony in the here and now. The reading of self-conceit I have proposed in this paper makes this especially clear. The arrogance involved in self-conceit is precisely that self-conceited agents make too little of the difference between the

ideal case and their own. They assume that they have already achieved or were naturally born with a kind of holiness of will, with impulses that are perfectly morally responsive and even morally reliable. Self-conceit is arrogant, then, not because the self-conceited agent believes they are superior to other human beings, but because they think and act as though human nature itself is morally ideal in a way it is not. This is a strange variety of arrogance, and it is not one that seems to call straightforwardly for a reminder to be humble. That result is as it should be, because Kant thinks that the cure for self-conceit is not (just) humility, but (also) self-respect.

4. What is Self-Respect?

Self-respect is directly opposed to self-conceit. In order to see why, it will be helpful first to focus only on the "respect" (*Achtung*) aspect of self-respect. We have already seen at this point that respect as an orientation toward the moral law stands in opposition to the close and sensibly harmonious relationship that would justify self-conceit. This is so because respecting the moral law involves valuing it specifically as something constraining. For example, Kant writes that "[t]he consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law, *yet as combined with an unavoidable constraint put on all inclinations*… is respect for the law" (5:80, emphasis mine). Elsewhere, he defines respect as "properly the representation of *a worth that infringes upon my self-love*" (4:401fn, emphasis mine).

The respect component of *self*-respect encodes this same appropriate orientation. We know this must be the case in part because according to Kant, *all* respect has its source in respect for the moral law. As he explains in a footnote, when one examines our respect for persons "one becomes aware that it always rests on consciousness of a duty which an example holds before us,

and that, accordingly, respect can never have any but a moral ground" (5:81fn). There is perhaps something unintuitive in the idea that our respect for ourselves could be in any sense the same attitude as our respect for the moral law. When we respect the moral law, we see it as something that limits us—that we must obey. This seems to involve *lowering* ourselves and our pretentions. Respect for oneself, on the other hand, seems as though it ought to be uplifting, akin to self-esteem. The concern that there is a conflict here brings me to another important aspect of respect, which accompanies it wherever it occurs in Kant's work: that it is complex.

An essential element of respect—in fact, the thing that makes it what it is—is that it involves a kind of intermixing of positive and negative components. This is evident in Kant's discussion of the aesthetic experience of the sublime, for instance. The things that Kant says about this aesthetic experience are important to our understanding of what respect involves because Kant explains our experience of the sublime by claiming that when we experience objects as sublime, what we are really experiencing is respect. Specifically, we are experiencing respect for our vocation to realize the moral law:

> [T]he feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation, which we show to an object in nature through a certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the object instead of for the idea of humanity in our subject)…. (5:257)

The details of what sublimity involves, then, also provide some details about what respect involves—and these details confirm that complexity is an important part of both.

Kant contrasts sublimity with another aesthetic experience—beauty. When a person experiences something as beautiful or as sublime, they are struck by a unique state of mind called up by the object in question. This object can be an object of art or nature, but I will stay with Kant's discussion of natural objects here, for ease. The "most important" (5:245) distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, according to Kant, is that when we experience beauty, our

state of mind is harmonious and directly pleasant, supporting a conception of nature on which nature is well-suited to our way of thinking and being in the world. When we experience sublimity, by contrast, our state of mind is conflicted: it is both painful and pleasant, supporting a conception of nature on which it is chaotic and resistant to us. As Kant puts it:

> [T]hat which, without any rationalizing, merely in apprehension, excites in us the feeling of the sublime, …[appears] in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that. (5:245)

The tension in our experience of those objects we would call sublime is sometimes the result of their unsuitability for our comprehension (this is true in the case of the mathematically sublime—think endless horizon) and sometimes the result of their perceived ability to completely overpower and destroy us physically (this is true in the case of the dynamically sublime—think crashing waterfall). Wherever more precisely the tension comes from, though, it is essential to the sublime. What distinguishes the sublime is that "the mind is not merely attracted by the [sublime] object [as it is in the beautiful], but is also always reciprocally repelled by it" (ibid); the "**sublime**… pleases immediately through its resistance to the interest of the senses" (5:267).

Kant's explanation of this aesthetic experience in terms of our respect for our vocation points to the fact that tension or complexity is also an essential component of respect. Kant also claims that it is more appropriate for human beings to represent morality under the aesthetic of the sublime than under the aesthetic of the beautiful. His justification for this claim further supports the importance of conflict or tension to respect:

> [T]he intellectual, intrinsically purposive (moral) good, judged aesthetically, must not be represented so much as beautiful but rather as sublime, so that it arouses more the feeling of respect… since human nature does not agree with the good of its own accord, but only through the dominion that reason exercises over sensibility. (5:271)

In this passage, Kant explains that our respectful relationship with the moral law makes it more suitable to represent the goals towards which our moral obligations direct us as sublime than as beautiful. This is so precisely because our "nature does not agree" all on its own with whatever morality requires, and so our moral action is conflicted. The concept of respect, in sum, is something of a focal point for Kant's emphasis on disharmony in morality.

Self-respect is often contrasted with self-degradation. This way of analyzing it brings out the fact that self-respect involves valuing, instead of failing to value, oneself. In the context of Kant's theory, however, because self-respect is *respect*, the thing that stands out about it is not so much that it is a valuing attitude as that it is a specific *kind* of valuing attitude—one that combines awareness of our worth with a sense of limitation or infringement.

In fact, when Kant speaks of the attitude morality inspires toward ourselves purely in positive terms, he uses a different term for it. Consider the following passage:

> On the other hand, however, since [the constraint of the moral law] is exercised only by the lawgiving of his *own* reason, it also contains something *elevating*, and the subjective effect on feeling… can thus be called *self-approbation*…. (5:80-81)

Here Kant refers to the elevating attitude toward ourself that follows from our awareness of our moral obligations as "self-approbation" (*Selbstbilligung*) (5:81). Initially, this seems like a mere inconsistency in terminology on Kant's part. The claim that self-respect refers particularly to such elevation and approval of oneself *along with* awareness that the moral law constrains and does not necessarily harmonize with one's whole being, however, implies that it is actually a careful reference to only one aspect of the complex attitude that constitutes respect for oneself.

In order to get ahold of the specific kind of valuing involved in self-respect, it is more helpful to contrast it (instead of with self-degradation) with a kind of self-valuing that is *not*

constrained or disharmonious: self-love[63]. For Kant, to love oneself is specifically to care for oneself as an animal with an interest in happiness.[64] Recall, though, that happiness does not refer simply to a bunch of nice feelings. According to Kant, the happiness of human animals like us encompasses and depends upon many complicated things, including relationships with other people. Because, according to Kant, we always desire happiness, self-love comes naturally to us. This way of valuing ourselves is no constraint on us.

Self-respect, on the other hand, is a way of valuing ourselves that parallels the way we value the moral law: self-respect requires that we come to terms with the fact that our own worth as moral beings does not always line up harmoniously with the happiness we also value. Respect for the moral law involves acceptance of the fact that we must actively control ourselves, instead of simply being carried along by our natures, in order to get our actions to line up with that law. We must pursue our happiness carefully because the things that seem most likely to make us happy will not always be things that are permissible for us. In parallel, respect for *ourselves* involves acceptance of the fact that we must *love ourselves* carefully.

Kant is not concerned that emphasizing the importance of self-respect will encourage our immoral tendencies. He need not be, because the caution essential to self-respect is exactly opposed to the unrestrained enthusiasm of self-conceit. Respect, recall, is awareness of a worth "that infringes upon my self-love" (4:401fn). Emphasizing self-respect, and not only respect for the moral law or others, drives home the following point: the worth with which we are

[63] Recall from earlier (section 1.1) that self-love names our tendency to conclude that we should go ahead and do things that we are most inclined to do.
[64] Kant treats acting out of self-love and acting in pursuit of one's happiness as interchangeable, as is evident when he comments that all rules for action that are material "are, without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle of self-love or one's own happiness" (5:22).

confronted when we consider our moral obligations, the worth that infringes upon our self-love, is also our *own* worth.

Compared to self-conceit, self-respect involves taking a certain distance from ourselves. Instead of being able to take our wants and needs and translate them immediately into the actions that come most naturally as a result of them, self-respect requires us to take a step back. We have to take in the information our wants and needs provide to us and actively make efforts to integrate that information with other aspects of ourselves—in particular our morality, with which these things have no guaranteed harmony. If we were the holy beings we imagine ourselves to be when we are subject to self-conceit, then this careful distance would not be necessary.

Kant is not alone in associating self-respect with a kind of cautious regulation of oneself. The literature on respect has many variations, in part because respect is closely associated with and often discussed by means of other concepts—for example, integrity, dignity, shame. Nonetheless, the idea that these concepts involve success or failure at a kind of self-control or restraint carries through across many other differences. Aurel Kolnai's (1976) analysis of dignity presents one example. In it, Kolnai covers various different aspects of dignity (dignity as a quality, human dignity, the undignified), but his analysis frequently returns to the idea that dignity is characterized by a kind of internal regulation, steadiness, or control. As he sees it, it is "obvious" that "rational self-control is an integral aspect of dignity" (256). Kolnai's analysis also contrasts dignity, as Kant's analysis contrasts respect, with liking. What is "most important" to dignity in human beings, according to Kolnai is the ability "to be able to endure what one 'gets' without necessarily assenting to it and growing to 'like' it" (262).

Self-control is also referenced in John Rawls's (1995) analysis of self-respect and shame, although Rawls's definition of self-respect does not tie it obviously to self-control. Rawls defines

self-respect as confidence in the worth of one's life-plan and in one's ability to carry it out. In his discussion of shame, however, in which agents take a blow to their self-respect, the importance of self-control emerges quite clearly. Shame is called up in someone, Rawls, explains particularly when "his conduct shows that he has failed to achieve the good of self-command" (130) and "its attendant excellences of strength, courage, and self-control" (ibid).

Diana T. Meyers (1986) amends Rawls's view to reintroduce a stronger element of control into the definition, arguing that in order to respect oneself, one must also value a life plan that is properly one's *own*, not assigned from outside. She reiterates the importance of self-control to respect in a later paper (1995), explaining that "[w]hoever warrants respect does so in virtue of his or her dignity as an agent or, in other words, in virtue of capacities to choose reflectively and to cultivate desirable dispositions to choose as opposed to natural endowments" (229). Gabriele Taylor (1995) argues, relatedly, that a person respects themself insofar as they act with integrity, and that "integrity comes down not to a specified set of virtues, but mostly to control, honesty with oneself and others about one's evaluations and control of actions that matches with that" (165).

So Kant is not alone in thinking that stepping back enough to control oneself is an important part of respecting oneself. In Kant's case, this claim is motivated by his commitment to what I have been calling disharmony in human moral action. Some philosophers have worried, however, that the rationale underlying Kant's commitment to holding oneself at arm's length involves an improperly negative or dismissive view of human animality.[65] In what follows, I

[65] We can see from some of the recent scholars who have discussed self-respect that an emphasis on self-control on its own need not indicate that a philosopher considers aspects of human beings historically associated with animality and nature (instead of rationality) unimportant. Meyers's (1995) development of what it means for a life plan to be one's "own," for instance, requires that the life plan in question be in line with one's convictions and also one's "affections" (85).

will argue that Kant's conception of self-respect does not have built into it the goal of becoming less animal and that his commitment to self-respect does not imply that being an animal is anything to be ashamed of.

5. *Respecting Oneself and Being an Animal*

Kant's account of self-respect has been considered problematic. In particular, philosophers have raised the concern that Kant's moral theory seeks out the wrong kind of relationship between human beings and their animality or physicality, encouraging people to value themselves only as disembodied and purely rational beings. To cite just two examples, Michael Neumann (2000) argues that Kant's theory of respect cannot really involve respecting persons as we think of them precisely because of its focus on the moral self, at the expense of any value for the animal self. As Neumann explains:

> For [Kant], the object of respect is the noumenal [that is, the purely rational/moral] self, and the reason for respecting it is its rational nature. The empirical [or animal] self, on the other hand, has neither dignity nor intrinsic value. But virtually all our individuality and personality [in the everyday sense] are located in the empirical self. (294)

Robin S. Dillon (1995) raises a similar concern, that on classical conceptions of self-respect, the self referred to is a "thin" or "generic" version of the self, one composed only of rights, consciousness, or rationality—something "disembodied" (295-6). This kind of self-respect, she writes, "is compatible with and even encourages self-alienation, for it allows that I can respect myself without paying attention to who I am, without taking *me* seriously" (296).

The idea here is that Kant, in his conception of what it means to respect oneself, relies upon the idea that there are two selves—the rational and the animal self. The key to self-respect

would be to realize that the rational self is one's true self, and to somehow remove oneself from or disown one's animality and prioritize one's purely rational self. This view would seem to imply that one's animal self is isolated from the value of one's moral self—an interfering thing to be discarded insofar as this is possible. There are commentators who read Kant as drawing a distinction between the real (moral-rational) and the less-real and ultimately not really consequential (animal) self. This comes out, for instance, in how some commentators read Kant's theory of the sublime.

For example, Paul Crowther (1991) explains the dynamical sublime as a feeling of relief (and hence, pleasure) that follows when we realize our initial impression that we cannot comprehend an object is, from the point of view of our purely rational selves, wrong (see 81). For Crowther, the key to this experience is our realization of "the ultimate authority and transcendence of our rational over our sensible being" (21). Paul Guyer (1993) also argues that the sublime is pleasurable to human beings because it confirms the "dominion of our rational personality over the threats of phenomenal nature" (208), such that even in the dynamic sublime (that is, experiences of the sublime that are called up by objects that could physically totally overwhelm or destroy us) comes about when the object of our fear is realized not *really* to be fearsome (213).[66]

Not all commentators find this self-dividing and re-prioritizing way of understanding Kant appropriate even to Kant's aesthetic writings. Katerina Deligiorgi (2014) argues against readings like this, which she calls "subsumptive" readings of the sublime. On these readings,

[66] Henry Allison's (2001) reading of the sublime does not quite make this move. Although he initially asserts that the sublime "evokes in us… a sense of our independence from, and superiority to, nature (both the sheer magnitude and power of external nature without and our sensuous nature within)" (306), he later clarifies that in order for Kant's theory to make sense, he must show that "a subject can within one and the same aesthetic experience be aware both of an utter helplessness in the face of the power of nature and of an independence from this power" (329).

sublime experiences are pleasurable for us because although we initially experience sublime objects as violent or overwhelming, we then realize that our moral selves are free of this limitation and hence that our true selves are superior to these objects. As she points out, this reading seems to drop the negative aspect of our experience of the sublime, which is supposed to be a very important part of it.

The reading of Kant on which he holds that respecting oneself is a matter of associating increasingly with one's purely rational and not one's animal self is also evident in the way commentators discuss the emergence of self-respect. Commentators tend to emphasize the connection between our self-respect and the pleasant awareness that we are rational, moral, and in some sense free from animality. For example, Owen Ware (2014) writes that our awareness "of our capacity to act independently of pathological incentives… [elicits] a kind of pleasure within us," this being "the pleasure of self-respect…." (16). Anne Margaret Baxley (2010) also attributes our self-respect directly to awareness of the rational-moral aspect of ourselves. For instance, she draws the following inference: "Given that the very law eliciting our respect is one that we legislate to ourselves, respect for the moral law entails respect for oneself, or self-esteem" (153).

Inferences of this type are misleading. It is true that our respect for ourselves depends upon our awareness that we are moral and rational. But the repeated drawing of this inference in the literature masks another equally true inference—that because the law we legislate is also one that *constrains* us, our self-esteem takes the form of self-*respect*. In other words, in order to respect ourselves, we must also be aware of our animality. By passing over this aspect of self-respect, commentators lend support to the conclusion that it is an important part of self-respect, for Kant, that human beings begin to think of themselves as more *truly* their rational than their

animal selves. Baxley, for instance, does hold that one important goal of Kantian moral behavior is to elevate ourselves over our sensibility and identify ourselves more closely with our rational self (122).

And Kant does sometimes seem to indicate that we should deny our animality. For example, in a list of sayings that Kant claims "more or less" represent the duty to respect oneself, Kant includes: "crying out in bodily pain… is unworthy of you" (6:436). Crying out in bodily pain seems to be a paradigmatically fitting animal reaction to bodily harm, one that simply affirms the reality that harm to one's body is harm to oneself. By claiming that this reaction is undignified, Kant seems to suggest that we ought to comport ourselves in a way that denies this obvious fact.

But it cannot be Kant's view that to respect oneself is to disown one's animality. It is apparent in Kant's moral writings that the fact that we are animals with bodies matters to our moral obligations. At the outset of his section on duties to oneself in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant explains that he will therein draw "a *subjective* division of a human being's duties to himself" tracking "whether the subject of the duty (the human being) views himself both as an **animal** (natural) and a moral being or **only as a moral** being" (6:420). The fact that duties to oneself viewed as animal are included at all in Kant's discussion speaks against *completely* ignoring one's animality in one's moral actions. Still, the distinction Kant draws here can give the impression that he is reinforcing the distinction between these two aspects of oneself as two "selves." The first set of duties, we might think, is directed to the animal self, insofar as that self is instrumentally necessary for purely moral purposes, and the second set is directed to the purely rational self alone.

Kant cannot mean the distinction in this way, however. The very first duty he includes in his section on duties *to oneself only as a moral being* is a duty that concerns, and even seems to be owed *to*, one's animal self: this is the duty to oneself not to lie. Here is how Kant explains the self-wrong involved in lying:

> The human being as a moral being… cannot use himself as a natural being… as a mere means (a speaking machine), as if his natural being were not bound to the inner end (of communicating thoughts)…. [The human being] is bound to the condition of using himself as a natural being in agreement with the declaration… of his moral being and is under obligation to himself to *truthfulness*. (6:430)

In this passage Kant describes the wrongness of lying in terms of the human being's use of himself *as a natural being* as a mere means. In other words, this violation is described by Kant in terms that make it seem like the violation is actually against what would usually be categorized as one's animal self, suggesting that violations *of* this self can count as violations of oneself purely as a moral being. In addition, Kant's analysis of this duty speaks directly against the idea that one ought to disown one's animality. The instrumentalization of the animal self is so far from what Kant is endorsing here that such instrumentalization is actually included by him as a reason the action is wrong. The liar disrespects himself *by* fracturing himself, acting as though two aspects of himself—his natural animality on the one hand, and his moral being on the other—were two separate beings, one of which (the animal) was merely at the disposal of the other to be used for whatever purposes it might have. He acts as though his animality were not *himself*, and not subject to the same rules to which he as a whole person is subject. He treats his body like a "speaking machine," an instrument separate from himself, which he can operate to make sounds that are not properly his.

What, then, can we make of Kant's (subjective) distinction between duties to oneself as an animal and as a moral being? I propose that we read this distinction not as a distinction

between two selves who can be the focus of our moral obligations, but as a distinction between two valid concerns that attach to the very same self, who is both moral and animal. Our duties to ourselves as a natural animal are those duties we have to our moral-animal selves which have to do specifically with the fact that we are animal, deriving from facts about what is natural to us. In other words, these duties encapsulate those duties we have to ourselves because we are perishable, finite, beings, who need things like food and rest in order to survive and continue to act. Our duties to ourselves as a moral being alone are still duties to our same, single, moral-animal selves, but they are duties to ourselves which have to do specifically with the fact that we are moral, deriving their specifics from facts about what it means to be a *moral* being in our (always animal) case.

Returning to the case of lying, this counts as a violation of one's duties to oneself as a moral being because lying involves using a moral animal being (oneself) as a mere means, stripping oneself (as animal) of moral importance. In a sense this is a violation "against" one's "animal self," but it is a violation particularly *because* our animal selves are *moral*. On my reading of Kant's distinction between duties to oneself as a natural and as a moral being, there is no conceptual trouble with this reference to oneself as animal, so long as this duty to one's animal self is one that is had *because* one's animal self is a *moral* self.

In her book *Moral Self-Regard* (2001), Lara Denis reads this case differently in part because of her different reading of the distinction between duties to oneself as a natural and as a moral being. In her reconstruction of Kant, Denis explains the wrongness involved in external lies (lies to others) and internal lies (lies to oneself) in different ways. Kant makes no note, as Denis does (92), that one form of lying is more difficult to justify as a wrong against oneself than

the other[67]—and his explanations throughout the passage suggest that he considers the wrong in both cases to be similar. For example, in the passage in which we might take Kant to be focusing more on external than internal lying (since it contains some mention of communicating to others), he cites the fact that lying makes one into "a mere deceptive appearance of a human being" (6:429). This comment fits neatly with the comment he makes in the passage I have included here about using oneself as a speaking machine, which occurs in the context of some more detail about lies to oneself. In both cases, the human being seems to have violated themselves by stripping what some commentators would call their two "selves" apart from each other, demoting the animal self to the status of mere tool.

I do not agree with Denis that internal and external lies call for radically different analyses, but I will here compare my reading to each of her separate analyses, since both seem to leave out Kant's mention of the natural (or animal) self. Working with the reading that duties to oneself as a moral being must be duties *to* one's rational-moral, and *not* one's animal, self, Denis's explanation for the wrongness of internal lies is that they interfere with one's ability to effectively reason and self-assess (since in lying to oneself, one muddles the information necessary for these tasks).[68] Hence, these lies interfere with one's rational capacities and thus violate one's rational self. External lying, on the other hand, is taken to be a violation because in lying to others, we fail to express our rational self in the world. In that sense, we fail to fully respect it.

Both of these analysis, it seems to me, require avoiding the parts of Kant's language that state that the violation here has to do particularly with one's use of one's *natural* self as a mere

[67] Although he does note that it is more difficult to explain how it is *possible* to lie to oneself (6:430).
[68] This explanation goes a fair bit past what Kant writes in the passage at hand. Kant makes no mention of the importance of accurate introspection for reasoning or self-assessment in the section on lying at all.

means and one's making of oneself as *appearance* into *mere deceptive* appearance. The reading I have offered here, which makes the distinction between *which self* we are violating inconsequential and focuses instead on *in what sense* we are violating one and the same moral-animal self, allows us to embrace the clear role that an obligation *to* a (moral) animal plays in Kant's analysis.

Kant's discussion of lying indicates that he recognizes the morally problematic nature of trying to do things with oneself as animal that one would not tolerate done to oneself as moral. Self-dividing actions (like lying, as Kant describes it) can also be problematic in ways that go beyond what Kant says here. Bernard Boxill (1976) points to another such self-dividing action when he discusses the complications involved in pretending, for strategic reasons, to be servile.[69] If this pretense is too all-encompassing, Boxill argues, it may undermine the pretender's own resolve that their servility truly is a pretense. As he puts it, the pretender must preserve his "knowledge of himself as self-respecting," and this requires that he must at least sometimes "shed his mask" (69). Boxill's argument for why shedding the servile mask is important focuses especially on how our communications with others and the legitimately grounded opinions of others can affect our own beliefs about ourselves. But part of the difficulty involved in wearing this kind of mask also comes from the same factor that Kant claims makes lying morally problematic in every case: that the animal being we use to "mask" in such cases is also the animal being we *are*.

So far, I have focused on how Kant's discussion of duties to oneself as a moral being alone supports identification with one's animality as well as one's morality. It is perhaps more

[69] Kant mentions the fact that servility can be strategically employed in the sense that one can belittle oneself to gain favor from someone else (6:435-6), but that is not what is under discussion here. Boxill is thinking of cases in which a kind of lying servility is used strategically to undermine or resist attempts to force individuals into true servility. As far as I can tell, this kind of case does not occur to Kant.

obvious how Kant's commitment to duties to oneself as animal reveals a commitment to the human being as a unified moral-and-animal being. These are duties we have specifically because of the limits we incur from being natural animals. Considerations about these limits are important to our moral obligations because they are, in a morally relevant sense, limitations of *us*. It is part of our moral duty to treat ourselves as beings with such limitations not just because this is important for making sure we can do morally good things, when the opportunity arises, but because it is important for making sure we survive and thrive. There is an obligation not to commit suicide, according to Kant, because to kill one's animal self is to kill *oneself*—and hence to "dispose of a human being" (4:429). Kant uses similar reasoning to insist that it is not permissible to take drugs or engage in other behaviors which partially incapacitate one's animal body (6:427)—again, it is one's own body, and in limiting oneself as an animal, one limits oneself full-stop.

Some of Kant's analyses of duties to oneself in this section also reveal a concern for acting in "natural" ways—or ways in accordance with what nature (metaphorically) intended. This concern for naturalness is precisely a concern for acting in ways that are sensitive to the health and well-being of ourselves as animals. Some of the duties that Kant derives on this basis are extreme and, I think, objectionable. For my purposes here, however, the important thing to note is that these errors on Kant's part do not seem to stem from a hatred or rejection of animal things. Rather, they stem from a combination of a relatively strong commitment to the importance of looking after ourselves as animals and a rigid conception of what is required for and dangerous to animal health.[70] Kant's objection to masturbation, for instance, hinges on the

[70] John H. Zammito's work on Kant's dabbling in the medical field provides further insight into Kant's views about health and how his views were at odds with even much of the medical knowledge in his own day. See, for example, "Kant and the Medical Faculty: *One* 'Conflict of the Faculties,'" forthcoming in *Epoche*.

claim that the impulse to sexual activity is naturally suited to reproduction (6:425). The way to correct Kant on his view, here, I suggest, would not have been to argue that there is nothing morally wrong with pleasure without further purpose, but to explain that masturbation and other kinds of non-procreative sexual activities serve many naturally important functions (stress reduction, social bonding, etc.) and are in ordinary cases helpful and not harmful to health.

Kant's discussion of duties to oneself as an animal affirms the significance of identifying with and understanding one's animality—even if Kant himself sometimes seems to have failed on the second count. However, in keeping with the observation that one's animal wants and needs, although *real* and one's *own*, are not always and automatically morally good, what Kant does do throughout his whole section on duties to oneself is remind readers of the distinction between those things we must do for ourselves because we are moral animals and those things that we will likely or always want to do.

For example, at the beginning of the section in which he lays out the obligation not to use food or drink "excessively," we find the following disclaimer:

> Here the reason for considering this kind of excess a vice is not the harm or bodily pain (diseases) that a human being brings on himself by it; for then the principle by which it is to be counteracted would be one of well-being and comfort (and so of happiness), and such a principle can establish only a rule of prudence, never a duty—at least not a direct duty. (6:427)

Here, Kant does not suggest that considerations of happiness are not worth thinking about. He emphasizes, though, his commitment to the claim that to make oneself happy is *not* to make oneself good.

To make oneself good is also not (all on its own) to make oneself happy.[71] Because we are not purely moral beings, the fact that making oneself happy is not the same as making oneself moral does not speak against its importance altogether. The following passage is instructive:

> Certainly, our well-being and woe count for a *very great deal* in the appraisal of our practical reason and, as far as our nature as sensible beings is concerned, *all* that counts is our *happiness*… but happiness is not *the only thing* that counts. (5:61)

In this passage, Kant explains that "as far as our nature as sensible beings is concerned," that is, to the extent that we focus only on what we can derive from the fact that we are natural animal beings, our happiness is of supreme importance. The issue is that because we are natural beings who are also bound by morality, there is more to be derived, so to speak, and more that is of importance on top of this.

In respecting ourselves, we do not identify more fully with our moral-rational self while disowning our animality. Rather, we acknowledge the disharmony between two things that are equally a part of us: our animal and our moral aspects. To respect ourselves, we must both be aware that our moral importance can outstrip our self-love and come to terms with the fact that we are beings who cannot be made fully happy and satisfied simply by doing what is morally best.

To conclude my discussion of Kant on our tie to animality, I would like to note that this understanding of self-respect gives us at least one reason to think that it is important, for Kant, that respect be a *feeling*—something that involves us not only as moral-rational, but also as animal, beings. Commentators have disagreed about whether the truly effective part of our

[71] See 5:126-7. Kant attributes to the Stoics the mistake of thinking that morality is sufficient for happiness and hence making the ideal virtuous agent "like a divinity in his consciousness of the excellence of his person, quite independent of nature (with respect to his own contentment), exposing himself to all the ills of life but not subjecting him to them" (5:127). Tellingly, since this also has to do with the human's undivorceability from their body, he also cites his departure from the Stoics in his analysis of suicide (6:422).

respect for the moral law is a feeling or a rational judgment of what the moral law calls for.[72] What we have seen here, though, is that the feeling aspect of respect is certainly central to making respect what it is. Our experience of respect is not really passive—it is an experience called up by intellectual contemplation of the moral law or of those things which are obligations for us. But there is something in the fact that this law and these obligations strike us *as obligations* that is involuntary. Our animality enters into our moral awareness not by helping to guide us to our moral obligations by means of a natural grace, but by reminding us that our animality is part of us and that it is *not* perfectly morally harmonious. As Kant explains, our "consciousness of *obligation* depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the *constraint* present in the thought of duty" (6:399, emphasis mine). Animality has the hardly dispensable role, in our moral experience, of reminding us of who and what we *are*.

6. Self-Acceptance and Self-Respect

Respecting oneself involves owning up to both one's moral-rational and one's animal aspects. It involves being honest about the disharmony between these aspects without fleeing into the illusion that one or the other of them is unreal. As Kant explains:

> [The human being] can and should value himself by a low as well as by a high standard…. Since he must regard himself not only as a person generally but also as a *human being*, that is, as a person who has duties his own reason lays upon him, his insignificance as a *human animal* may not infringe upon his consciousness of his dignity as a *rational human being*, and he should not disavow the moral self-esteem of such a being…. (6:435)

[72] Some commentators see respect's categorization by Kant as a feeling to be essential to its ability to move human beings to action. See Ina Goy's (2007) and Stephen Darwall (2008), for example. Josephine Nauckhoff (2003) argues that respect as a feeling is necessary in order to combat weakness of will. Others, however, argue that it is the rational judgment that the moral law requires some action which does all of the moving of the agent in question, while the feeling accompanying this motion is something of a side-effect. See for example Paul Guyer (1993, ch.10); and Andrews Reath (2006).

Here, Kant does not claim that we ought to drop our lower standard of evaluating ourselves. We do not forget that we are beings who desire to be happy, and who are to a great degree at the mercy of nature. However, we also do not let that standard interfere with our moral assessment of ourselves.

It might seem as though, given this characterization of self-respect, self-respect is not really a positive way of thinking about oneself at all. What is positive, we might ask, about acknowledging moral disharmony in oneself? Self-respect counts as a positive attitude about oneself because in it, we value ourselves while accepting ourselves. This stands in contrast to the way we value ourselves when we think self-conceitedly. It is obvious how self-conceit involves a failure to appreciate our moral-rational aspect, on Kant's view. But it also involves a failure to appreciate our animal aspect. There is a *sense* in which self-conceited agents take their animal wants and needs very seriously. But self-conceited agents also conceive of themselves as holy animals with morally reliable impulses—animals that bear little resemblance to the unruly moral animals they actually are. Kant's insistence that we cannot flatter ourselves into thinking we are holy beings is accompanied by the claim that *can* have respect for ourselves and thus value ourselves in full awareness of the fact that we are, in part, simply animals.

In much of our thinking about self-respect, we focus on how self-respect requires us to stand up for ourselves and for our own moral importance. In his well-known paper "Servility and Self-Respect," Thomas E. Hill Jr. (1991) lays out an account of the wrongness of servility as a failure of self-respect. According to Hill, the failure involved in servility is a failure "to acknowledge fully [one's] own moral status because [one] does not fully understand what [one's] rights are, how they can be waived, and when they can be forfeited" (9). The Kantian justification for the importance of this awareness, Hill explains, is that a failure to fully or

properly value one's own rights is indicative of a general failure to properly value all rights (including the rights of others), and hence morality itself (13-14).

Tommie Shelby (2012) also draws on the connection between self-respect and valuing oneself as a moral being, in his definition of self-respect as a pillar of virtue in the non-ideal circumstances of oppression:

> To possess self-respect, in the sense that concerns me here, means recognizing oneself as an object of respect. In particular, it means *viewing oneself as a moral agent and moral equal with all others and valuing oneself accordingly*. Self-respecting persons insist on receiving just treatment, for they firmly believe that in virtue of their moral status they are entitled to such treatment. They do not believe that they must earn this treatment through, say, meritorious action or good character. They know that their capacity for moral agency alone is sufficient to establish their right to equal justice, and this conviction functions for them as an unshakable basis of self-worth. (527-528)

The Kantian understanding of self-respect I have introduced here adds that it is an important component of properly valuing oneself as a moral being that one acknowledge how difficult doing this can be. Being an animal can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be a cruel one. We go on wanting and needing things even in conditions in which the only way we can acquire those things is by acting as we judge we ought not and shaking our commitment to our own moral value. We can be bombarded with desires we reject and stripped of desires we desperately need. Kant's conception of self-respect, with its emphasis on disharmony, allows us to say something that seems true especially in such situations—that to demand of oneself that one gracefully *like* what one morally *must* do is actually, in a sense, a failure of self-respect.

I think that Kant's theory stands in need of modification if it is to fully acknowledge human non-ideality. Kant does not recognize all the particular kinds of hardships we encounter. For example, he does not seem to seriously entertain the possibility that one would have to help oneself remember the draw of one's own happiness. I think the fact that we clearly *can* find

ourselves stripped of this drive implies that there is a category of duties to oneself as an animal that Kant never considers: one that has purely to do with looking out for one's drive for life in the first place. The fragility of the human drive for happiness might imply, for instance, that one's duties to oneself generate reasons to avoid experiences that are likely to strip the felt meaning from one's life, like the betrayal of all one's family and friends, even for some righteous cause.

The case of Maria von Herbert, as recounted by Rae Langton (1992), may have called for the application of one such overlooked duty. Langton discusses the case of Maria von Herbert, a correspondent of Kant's who was contemplating suicide after her confession that she was not a virgin irrevocably distanced her from a former friend and love interest. Kant, of course, holds that von Herbert has a duty to preserve herself. Because Kant assumes that the drive to happiness is inextirpable, his own development of the duty to preserve oneself focuses on things like feeding oneself adequately and not ending one's own life. In von Herbert's case, however, it seems plausible that her attention to her own preservation would have to have taken the form of attention to re-stimulating this naturally essential drive for happiness. In writing to Kant and asking to visit, a request he seems to have ignored, she may well have been trying to do just this.[73]

This is just one example of how Kant's understanding of how natural animality works could lead to errors in his account of living up to self-respect without his ever undervaluing animality itself. Such errors need not indicate that we should give up on the way Kant

[73] Langton's own suggestion for an unexpected duty that arises in von Herbert's case is that, given von Herbert's position in a thoroughly chauvinistic society, it may have been appropriate for von Herbert to excuse herself from the usual duty not to lie (in this case, about her virginity), given the terrible consequences honesty predictably held in her case. Langton's argument for this conclusion is that in von Herbert's social condition, she could predict that telling the truth would have a devastating effect on her ability to demand and maintain the respect that she was owed in virtue of her status as a moral being from others. On these grounds, Langton suggests, von Herbert may have had a *duty to lie* about this (504).

approaches self-valuing more generally. In particular, I think we ought to consider it a valuable feature of Kant's moral theory that it faces up to the fact that moral action often does not come naturally to us.

An important failing of self-conceit is that by attempting to leap immediately into a holy relationship with morality and ourselves, the self-conceited agent seems to imply that there is something intolerably defective about being in a respectful relationship to these. There is arguably something deficient and undesirable in the fact that our moral duty and our desire for happiness can come so apart from each other. Perhaps, as Kant says, we ought to strive for a world in which the disharmony that makes our moral experience so uniquely human is no longer present. Self-respect, in short, might not be everything that we want—morally or prudentially—for ourselves, aspirationally. But I think that Kant is right that it is sometimes what we need, and that this is nothing to be ashamed about. It is sometimes important, in the struggles of a human life, for the "graces," as Kant puts it once, to "maintain a respectful distance" (6:23fn).

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